

FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD.

AN ESSAY

ON ITS

NATURE, EXCELLENCE, IMPORTANCE,

AND

MEANS OF IMPROVEMENT.

BY RICHARD JONES. *K*

Acquaint now thyself with him.—JOB xxii. 21.

Οπη δ' αν απελθω, εκει ηλιος, εκει σεληνη, εκει αστρα, εκει ΠΡΟΣ
ΘΕΟΥΣ ΟΜΙΑΙΑ.

Quocunque abiero, ibi erit sol, ibi luna, ibi stellæ, ibi collo-
quia cum deo.

ARRIAN. IN EPICTET.

THE SECOND EDITION.

CONSIDERABLY ENLARGED AND IMPROVED.

LONDON:

PRINTED BY C. WHITTINGHAM,

FOR T. N. LONGMAN, NO. 39, PATERNOSTER ROW.

1797



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PREFACE

TO

THE SECOND EDITION.

RELIGION is the most important science; and the knowledge of it should be our greatest concern. The theory, the business, and the comfort of it, lie in different things from what have been represented; and are to be found in a narrower compass than many have taken. The simplicity of religion is its beauty and energy; and by enlarging we enfeeble and deface it. In the early ages, a few comprehensive words conveyed God's requirements, and his servants' duty. Faith in God, and devotional intercourse with him, is given us as the essence of patriarchal piety; and made the root of all the excellency and dignity of character which succeeding ages revere,

and are commanded to imitate: how unlike the later and longer descriptions in which the lovely form of religion has been lost; and the vital part of it suffered to expire! Abstract speculations, however refined; scholastic systems, 'graven with as much of art, and man's device,' as they can be; and bodily services, be they as many and as regular as they will, are not religion. The unparalleled peace, honour, and happiness that are peculiar to her high and holy paths, are not to be found in them. Religion is an inward, and a spiritual thing; the intercourse of our spirits with the great Father of spirits: the moving as under his eye; and with the satisfactions of his presence and favour. If this religion belongs to us, we have all that is good and happy in us; and may leave the superstitious, disputers, and formalists, to their jejune observances, vain imaginations, and heartless labours.

What was the religion that God prescribed to the man that he called his friend?

friend? We cannot take religion from a higher authority; or as given with more truth and goodness.

‘I am the Almighty God: walk before me, and be thou perfect!’

Surely, that which is perfection with God, should be perfection of character with us: and what he makes so, is, the reverence and love of himself, under a persuasion of his glory and all-sufficiency.

Here is the religion, that has all those circumstances to recommend it, that we have ever attached attention and respect unto.

How great a matter have some thought ‘antiquity’ in religion to be! Here is the oldest religion of all: that which animated holy men from the beginning of the world; and ‘shone into their hearts, when God first commanded the light to

shine out of darkness:' that warmed their bosoms, cheered their souls, and guided their steps, before prophets declared the will of heaven, or God spake by Moses.

The religion of walking with God, and before him, is a religion of continuance and perpetuity.

'The son of man, when he cometh, shall find this 'faith' in the earth,' whatever 'forms' shall be destroyed. Enthusiasm consumes by its own fervors. Formality perishes in its own coldness: and the religion of authority and splendour faints under a load of ornament; or the weight of the armour we give it for defence; but faith, and reverence, devotion, and love, are unoppressed, and unencumbered things: they are too æthereal for injury; and live through the felicity of their own nature, and mutual influence. Nothing prevails against them!

This

This is a complete religion. It shall never 'wax old or vanish away,' at the bringing in of any perfecter form, or brighter hope. Metaphysical subtelties, and logical distinctions, philosophical and theological systems, and dogmas, give way to one another in endless succession; and every ideal building that is raised upon them tumbles in its turn; what is done by one hand is dashed in pieces by another; and it is the work, and perhaps the invidious pleasure, of a following age 'to sweep away the fine-spun cobwebs of a former:' or to carry off its ponderous rubbish, and lumber: but who shall so account of the good treasure of a good mind: of an enlightened understanding, and a devotional heart? Who shall bring us better things than assimilation to Deity, and union with him? Here, 'that which is perfect, is already come.'

Let every system go, but the primitive system of divine light, and love, and heavenly fellowship: for, true it is, how-
ever

ever melancholy the consideration, that we must abjure the systems that have disturbed the world; provoked the worst tempers of men, and filled christendom with confusion and blood, before we can upon satisfactory foundation, establish the peace and security of a liberal and ingenuous mind.

The religion of divine friendship, and heavenly intercourse, is the most engaging, and self-recommending religion. Had religion been always so considered, surely we should never have heard of persecution; or seen any of its follies and cruelties; for then it would have fully come up to the saying of the first wise disuader, and been 'a fighting against God:' which is what no persecutor would confessedly be. We 'add to the things that are written in God's book:' and incorporate ours with his better things: and then we contend, and strive, and slay, about such additions; or think it wondrous 'charity' if we do not. But how does the friend
of

of God, or the things that make him so, need my charity? This is the great kindness we do to religion; we superadd to it that which makes it want the charity we all severally too much refuse. Divine love, and divine similitude; exalted affections, and heavenly converse, can have no foe, and need no candour.

The religion of friendship with God, and devotional intercourse with him, is the 'easiest' religion: and this is another recommendation of it, and mark of its superiority. This is the religion that we may mind, not only in God's house, but in our own; and that will do for the crowded city, as well as the retired solitude. We may attend to it in the hours of business, as well as at the seasons of leisure. A man that is possessed with a suitable sense of the presence and perfections of God, may say, 'on thee do I wait all the day long!' Not that he is all the day in a church, or that he has any occasion to be so: some are, and to very little purpose.

Faith

Faith and love, and the spirit of devotion, make a good man that living temple, that spiritual house, where spiritual sacrifices are offered up continually. The supreme reverence and love of God, consecrate us, and all that we do; make religious acts of common offices; and life, a continued homage to the God of our life. This blessed pervading leaven, 'leaveneth the whole lump;' and there is more of religion in one day of that man's common and ordinary conduct, who is full of God, and a desire to please him, than in the longest course of formal observances, and pompous celebrations. We may have no religion at all, in what pass for religious performances: and there may be much of the spirit and felicity of it, in what seem but common attentions. 'It is the spirit that quickens,' and exalts. Paul speaks of 'doing all things to the glory of God.' We do so, when we eat and drink, as well as when we bend the knee and worship, if we have the true spirit of devotion and gratitude in us. It is a happy and a
divine

divine art, not to make religion a distinct thing from common and ordinary character, the acts and exertions of it, considered as occasional and infrequent; but to bring it into daily life and conduct; and to have our general manners exhibit the heightening and commanding impress of it. This will be living the natural, and spiritual life together: the excellence, and happiness of the one, relieving us under the infirmities, and infelicities of the other: and where is the impracticability or difficulty of this?

A no inconsiderable character of our own nation¹, thought religion, and especially the christian religion, to be 'a sort of divine philosophy that was to exist in the mind, but was incapable of being exemplified in real and active life.' But whence this singular apprehension? Christ thought otherwise when he bid his disciples 'learn of him:' and Paul, when he spake of 'the

¹ Sir Walter Raleigh.

life of Jesus being made manifest in our mortal flesh.' 'The tongue of an angel cannot pronounce any things more weighty and excellent than the christian virtues.' How much is attributed to them! With them, we shall never fall: for them, have an entrance administered unto us into the everlasting kingdom: but they are practicable and familiar virtues also: fortitude, and knowledge; temperance, and patience; godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity. What man of God may not be perfect in these things? Let us love the religion that inspires these at once mild and magnificent qualities; and grow up in them, unto him, who is our most worthy, and venerable head; even Christ. They will give us union with him, and the father now; and union eternally.

Will it be any satisfaction to those who pronounce the religion of Jesus defective in that it does not more expressly inculcate human friendship, to be told that the
design,

design, and the spirit of it, is to establish the divine !

Devotional intercourse produces divine similitude : and so becomes the religion which a great philosopher wished for. ‘ I could wish for a religion, said Cicero, which instead of ascribing the imperfections of men to the Gods, would bring a portion of God’s perfection and purity to men².’

It is five and twenty years since this book was first published. Its subject gave it acceptance with many serious persons of different sentiments and persuasions in religion : and it is now re-printed at the request of some such. Of whatever church or communion we are, we all feel a greatness and pleasure in the thought of belonging to God ; and welcome that which reminds us of the connection, and seeks to establish it : as this book is meant to do.

² Divina malle ad nos.

It was translated into Dutch, in the year 1774, and I was informed was well received, and had some spread in that language.

Some additions, and transpositions, have made it, in a manner, a new book ; though the original form of it has been preserved. I have been willing to make it in this new edition as entire and useful as I could. May it promote the friendship of which it treats !

R. J.

*Greenwich,
July 26, 1797.*

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FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD:

AN ESSAY.

INTRODUCTION.

And he was called the Friend of God.

JAMES ii. 23.

ALL men talk of the excellence and pleasure of friendship; but how few are acquainted with it in this its noblest kind, and happiest exercise! 'Friend of God,' is an appellation that would do an infinite honour to the most glorious angel; but it is given to a man like ourselves: and to evince the reality of the character, and the justice of the name, he is stiled so by God himself: 'Abraham, my friend!' This is a title of singular, as well as transcendent honour. In the Bible we read

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of

of some others, that they were ‘just men, upright in their generation, and that they walked with God:’ Abraham has the appropriate dignity, ‘Friend of God:’ and it was amidst all the imperfections of frail humanity that he lived in such devotional habits, and such exalted intercourse with Deity, as made him worthy to be so denominated. Let us consider this matter with a generous emulation; and hence, form a higher, and a truer apprehension, of what we are capable of being and enjoying!

Friendship with God, is an incomparable theme: it bespeaks the pureness, greatness, and happiness of the mind in which it dwells; and is above all human compositions: upon this theme, a celestial creature might preach, and beings of an higher order than men, might attentively and joyfully hear: but the dignity of the subject does not forbid it to be treated in our inferior way; nor must we decline giving it our best consideration, though no tongue or pen of man is adequate to its sublimity and extent.

Jesus

Jesus Christ lived and died 'to bring us to God;' to the knowledge, love, and fellowship of him in this world, and to his acceptance and presence in the world to come: he has left his religion amongst us for the same good purpose; and the ministers of his religion cannot better serve the design, both of that religion and its author, than by recommending an holy, humble, and habitual communion with God, as the essence of christianity, the fountain of honour, and the source of very high and permanent pleasure. This is what is attempted in the following pages.

CHAP. I.

OF FRIENDSHIP IN GENERAL.

FRRIENDSHIP has always been held a dear and sacred name ; and reckoned a chief article of human happiness : we find it in some forms and degrees every where ; and men affect it for their credit, as well as their comfort : disregard is considered, as in a measure, dishonour ; and to be unnoticed, is thought to carry in it an implication, that either worth, or amiableness, is wanting.

Friendship, is what a noble and long admired writer calls it, ‘ the real principle of life ; the end of life, and not (as some philosophers would have it) the means. Let who will despise friendship, or deny a social principle, they will, if they are any thing ingenuous, be urged, one time or another, to confess the power of it : and if they enjoy it not themselves, will admire or envy it in others : and when they have inverted the whole matter
of

of life, and made friendships, and acquaintances, and alliances, serve only as a means to the great and sole end of interest; they will find, by certain tokens within their own breasts, that they are short of the true and real interests of human life¹.

Friendship has always been the strongest in the best minds: and it has led to deeds that are almost incredible. What self-denial, what endurance of hardship, what fortitude in danger, what defiance of death, has not friendship produced! it is indeed similar to faith, that lofty principle, so magnificently celebrated in the scriptures; for the contempt of the world which it has inspired; the superiority to all private and partial attachments which it has created; for the arduous tasks which have been undertaken, and the benevolent sacrifices that have been made under the influence of it.

Friendship is what philosophy cannot over-rule by any of its rigours; or give us a substitute for in any of its bounties.

¹ Lord Shaftesbury's Letter to a Student.

Seneca, stoic as he was, could expatiate upon the blessings of friendship; lay himself open to its impressions, and seek his relief in its several offices: and Cicero and Pliny do to this day charm the world with what are no other than its genuine and interesting effusions.

No elevation of rank can set mankind above its sweetness and use; and without it, the highest and most shining conditions, are dull vacuity, or splendid infelicity. Kings have laid aside their crowns and robes of state to indulge to its familiar exercises. Alexander conquered the world; but would have found the vast wilderness of it uncomfortable, in comparison of the narrower inclosure of social and friendly connections. The man whose ambition and selfishness grasped the whole earth, could acknowledge another self in his friend².

² Ephestion accompanying Alexander to the tent of Darius, was by some of the captives mistaken for Alexander: Apology being made for the misplaced homage, the conqueror answered, 'Indeed you were not deceived, for he also is Alexander.'

The

The tyrant that could be held by no other bands, was awed and conquered by the Power of Friendship: found his heart softened, and his arm unnerved by its all-prevalent operations; and with admiration and reverence solicited admission into the hallowed fraternity he had prepared to break³.

Necessary as friendship is to the great and powerful of the earth, it is not their exclusive privilege, or appropriate advantage, as to its salutary offices, its soul-satisfying gratifications, and engaging charms. The supporting and comforting

³ Damon and Pithias were two Pythagoreans: they had such an affection for each other, that Dionysius having sentenced one of them to death, the other became surety for his punctual return on a certain day, till which the tyrant had given him a leave of absence, for settling his affairs, at some distance: to submit to death, in the room of his companion, if he should fail of appearing—the condemned person returned with fidelity and exactness. The tyrant, charmed with the generosity of this noble pair, pardoned the condemned person, and begged to be received as a third of their society.

Cicero Offic. iii. 10.

influence of friendship, cheers and blesses the humble and the low. Friendship dwells in the cottage, without disdain or reserve: it animates the dead calm of poor, unoccupied, and unambitious lives, and supplies the privation or loss of coveted enjoyments: for it is not from the house full of silver and gold, that some of the most amiable exertions and kindest vouchsafements of friendship are fetched: with the good treasure of a good heart, sincerity and tenderness, self-denial and faithfulness, we may shew its spirit, and discharge its excellent and acceptable duties: these lovely qualities will create a ready, and a sufficient storehouse unto us: and these have been amongst the children of poverty and pain, those interesting and endearing expressions of friendship, that challenge our affectionate admiration, and upbraid the indifference and insensibility of those who have ampler resources at command. They who could not divide an estate, have divided their morsel, and given a sigh, or a tear, to sorrow, when silver or gold they had none to give.
There

There have been those, who, pressed with their own wants, have pitied and relieved the wants of others. They have cast in of their penury. They have given, what for the moment was all their living. The hours unclaimed by labour and hard necessity, they have allotted to the sick neighbour's chamber: have foregone the sleep that their toil made as expedient as sweet unto them; and held their own eyes waking, because another's were closing in death. Abundant love, with that competent knowledge which virtuous, if unlettered persons, seldom fail to possess, have supplied words, in season, beyond the tongue of the learned; and which have encouraged to enter the dark valley without fearing evil. Many such exemplifications and interchanges of constancy and fidelity, of gratitude and pity, in poor and humble stations, pass under our observation, or are brought to our hearing; and I doubt not but there are innumerable more exertions of these amiable qualities in the unnoticed paths of life, which will never be proclaimed to

men, till their energies, their merit, and their recompence, are proclaimed together; the smallest kind offices, done in the obscurest corners, being graciously acknowledged, and infinitely heightened, by that wonderful declaration of the judge himself, 'Inasmuch as ye did it, to the least of these, ye did it unto me!' Let the poor man lift up his head: the offices of friendship are in his power; and the remunerations of friendship may be his inheritance! Love and sympathy have the healing of the Sun of Righteousness in them; they make us like him who bore, and answered, that glorious name; and they compose a balm for the bleeding interests of humanity, that may be applied by those who cannot pour in oil and wine. We may have the honour and reward of the good Samaritan, without being able to command an equally ready, various, and plentiful store⁴.

⁴ More interesting exemplifications of love and sympathy, in humble and afflicted life, have no where been witnessed, than at those houses of mercy, which in this land of mercy are raised for the relief of those
whole

The barbarous Scythian has revered
the name of friendship, as well as the

whose hard lot it is to be at once sick and poor. I was at one of them on the day that men come to be healed. In the cloister, as once in Bethesda's porches, lay a great multitude of impotent folk, waiting the doubtful selection, and the beckoning hand of charity. There were all the diseases which Jesus cured when he went about doing good on the earth. There was the man sick of the palsy, lying on his couch, borne of four. I saw the halt, and the maimed, and the withered; the wasted, and the swollen; those that were spent with grief, and those that cried out for anguish. My eye affected my heart, and, moistened at this miniature of sorrowing humanity; a secret murmur stole from my bosom—Blessed God, art thou indeed our father, and are these thy children! I found myself betrayed into the almost rebellious expostulation,

Can thus
Th' image of God in man, created once
So goodly and erect, though faulty since,
To such unsightly sufferings be debased
Under inhuman pains? why should not man,
Retaining still divine similitude
In part, from such deformities be free,
And for his Maker's image-sake exempt?

Par. Lost, xi.

All the power of man was present to heal: and while

polished Greek: subscribed to its obligations, and yielded to its power: and with the point and spirit of Lucian, is made to contend for its supremacy, as well as reality, amongst his own rude and uncultivated tribes; and to oppose their stranger pledges, and even extravagant examples

I blessed the names, and memories, of those friends of human kind, whose munificences had reared the noble structure, or given extent and permanency to its hospitalities and comforts, I was proportionately moved with the quick and amiable sensibilities of those that brought their suffering subjects for health and cure, and 'pressed to the pool to put them in!' They wiped the weeping eye, and clammy cheek: sustained the falling head, and fainting heart: they cheered the drooping, stayed the flitting, and fetched back the seemingly departed spirit. Their kind accompaniments, and persevering attachments; their pledged remembrances, and promised assiduities, supported under the approaching parting; and encouraged to pass that door, where happily for themselves, afflicted creatures are committed to others, of salutary skill, and less embarrassing susceptibilities! May your pious and faithful attentions, said I, be recompensed! Whether you are fathers, sisters, friends, or brothers, may you receive your dead raised to life again; your sick, every whit whole! That cup of cold water you are at this moment tendering, shall not lose its reward!

of

of it, to the correcter and calmer examples of civilized and refined nations. The people, whose sword or bow was their greatest Deity, could pay divine honours to friendship: they invoked her as a goddess: they raised to her an altar: they built temples to those^s who most illustriously displayed the strength, and the spirit of friendship: and charged the rights and duties of it on their children, with more zeal and solemnity than those that arose out of any other connections.

The nearest and dearest relations of life, do not, and cannot supersede friendship. To the names of father, wife, child, or kinsman, the name of friend must be added, to make the sum of our social comfort complete.

Friendship is the delight of sanguine youth; and the prop of tottering age: without it, prosperity has no bloom; and with it, adversity diminishes in its burthen: 'a friend is born for adversity:' the anxious heart expands at his approach, and the tear ceases at affliction's eye.

^s To Orestes and Pylades, Lucian's *Toxaris*.

Next to the providence of God, the bosom of a friend is our refuge, and his counsel our guide, amidst the dangers and difficulties of our exposed and struggling state: and therefore he who wrote, 'vanity of vanities, all is vanity,' upon every thing else in this world, charges a perseverance in friendship upon us, as our readiest and surest resource. 'Thine own friend, and thy father's friend, forsake not.'

Solitariness, where affected, is considered as a disadvantageous singularity; and, where forced, as an infelicity. This made Adam's condition imperfect, and his paradise defective, in the estimation of God himself: he who said of all his other works, 'that they were very good,' also saying, 'that it was not good for man to be alone.' With the joys of innocence, the pleasures of intelligence, the plenty and beauty of Eden, the works and wonders of a magnificent world to entertain his admiring eyes, and the condescending visits of its bounteous Maker to his terrestrial abode, society, and its intercourses, were wanting to complete the happiness of
of

of this new formed, favourite creature. And if Adam wanted society in the day of his original rectitude, and wanted it in that lovely garden where the Lord God placed him, and where he saw nothing but what furnished occasion for peace, hope, and devotion, how much more must we want it, in this reduced state of humanity, where we have continually something to disturb our repose, to cloud our prospects, and break in upon the orderly, harmonious, and religious frame of our minds! If society, and the pleasures of it, were necessary to the first man, when secluded from every evil, how more necessary to us, who are surrounded with, or suffering under, so many evils!

The second Adam, the Lord from heaven, found his consolations in those intercourses of society, and friendship, which were declared thus necessary to the first: and from considering the great inward happiness of so ample and excellent a spirit as he possessed, we may infer the importance and necessity of Friendship to the most intelligent and virtuous of the earth.

His

His mind was light ; his heart was love ; his will was righteous ; his affections elevated and pure ; and in that connection with heaven, which devotional habits establish, he was never alone, for the father was with him ; and yet, notwithstanding all these divine essentials of blessedness within him, he sought, and indulged to, the additional satisfactions of Friendship from without. ‘I have called you friends!’ Of the little band to whom he said this, one, was a devil : the rest, with a general sincerity and fidelity of attachment, were of dull and heavy spirits ; of mistaken apprehensions ; and so wanting in courage and steadfastness, as to forsake him in the hour of danger. ‘He who knew what was in man,’ and what was in these men, anticipated every particular of their unfavourable and unworthy behaviour. ‘One of you shall betray me!’ ‘Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? I say unto thee, that this day, even in this night, thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me!’ ‘All ye shall be offended because of me this night!’

Jesus

Jesus enjoyed friendship no otherwise than with all the lessening and qualifying circumstances that we do: with all the allays of hypocrisy, and sinister interest, in some; of timidity, and human infirmity in all: but yet, it was friendship still; he called these disciples, friends; and passed many happy hours with them: making no difference in his outward carriage to any, from his perfect knowledge of all. How engaging his address at meeting them for the last time; ‘With desire have I desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer.’ What an elegance, both of friendship, and devotion, when taking leave of the refreshments of the present life in their company, and anticipating future and happier interviews! ‘I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my father’s kingdom!’ In all his discourse in the passover chamber, there are such just sentiments, endearing expressions, and fine elevations of friendship, as manifest the purest, kindest,

kindest, and most generous heart ; and, at this distant day, they excite the most pleasing emotions.

Of the twelve disciples, three shared his confidential regards more than the rest ; and were taken by him into his most devotional retirements : and of the three, one was still further distinguished, and called ‘ the disciple whom Jesus loved.’

In the favoured house at Bethany, and at the grave of Lazarus, we see the Friendship of Jesus in every circumstance in which it can impress and please us. We see the sensibilities of grief, and the dignity of it : the tenderness, and the correctness, of sorrow : the sympathy of him that calls us brethren, and the greatness of the Son of God ; of high interest with heaven, and of power over all flesh, to give present life, and life eternal ; having at once God’s glory, and the comfort of a mourning family in view ; and to serve both, assuming, and exemplifying a name that transcends every other name ; and commands everlasting veneration : ‘ I
am

am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live !'

From this short account of friendship, who would not wish to cultivate it, in its highest improvements, and with the best and worthiest characters: and, if the distance between heaven and earth should be found not to forbid, to maintain it, with nobler and happier creatures than ourselves! But is friendship with God to be had?

CHAP II.

OF FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD.

‘**W**ILL God, in very deed, dwell with men on the earth!’ was the exclamation of a mighty monarch: not made in doubt, but in the joyful surprise of a humble and devotional spirit. Solomon, though himself a sovereign, had that just sense of the transcendent greatness of God, which annihilates all human distinctions; and had not yet degenerated into those paltry notions of Deity, that prepared him for his mean, and impious, idolatries.

That divine condescension, which is here made the matter of question and wonder, has always been realized for our establishment and delight.

God hath ever been conversable with mankind, in a way of religion and favour, Adam, we have reason to believe, had
constant

constant communion with God: and instead of being lost by his transgression, we find it, fully and freely continued to his children. The patriarchs were favoured with immediate revelations, and that, not only in the higher matters of religion, but in those of common and ordinary occurrence. They had their verbal converse with Deity; they sought divine direction and instruction, and they had it; they vowed, and God accepted their vows; they entered into stipulations of duty and virtue, and were dealt with in a way of compact and covenant; they received promises, and had their fulfilments.

Israel was the nation that had God always nigh unto it. The Israelites he attended in all their unsettled, and wandering states. He had an ambulatory tabernacle, and mercy-seat, in the wilderness with them, for forty years; his own tent moving with theirs; and resting when theirs did. 'He spake unto them in the cloudy pillar, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock:' and when, by a train of mercies and miracles, he had brought

brought them to the promised land, he kept up a continual, visible, intercourse with them. How sublime a ministration was it that he established! Prophets, and holy men, let into the counsels of the most high, opened the book of his decrees to this people; and made known the astonishing revolutions that were to come to pass in all the great nations of the earth! How sublime, and how encouraging a ministration; that was the connecting medium between the upper world and the lower: made present and future time to meet: and brought the designs and processes of almighty and governing providence into clear and immediate view: shewing to the Jews their share, and benefit, in the mighty changes that were to take place in all the kingdoms of the world; comforting them under present calamities, and predicting the certainty, and the period of their deliverance: they saw the value and honour of this most glorious dispensation, as they saw the value of other things, in their intermission, or withdrawal, only: and in their temporary dereliction of God, they expressed

expressed their sorrowful sense of their loss: 'we see not our signs: there is no more any prophet, neither is there any that knoweth how long⁶.'

The christian dispensation, is, in an especial degree, a system of conversableness and intercourse with heaven: it conveys the knowledge of God; invites into fellowship with him, and supplies us with assistance and courage in the whole course of our duty, and obligations to him.

But besides maintaining conversableness and intercourse, God has vouchsafed friendship to men; and had his friends amongst them. 'Enoch walked with God;' and after the habitual, familiar piety which the word denotes, 'God took him.'

As to Abraham, God is described as coming to his house: communing with

⁶ The plaintive simplicity of this verse, is well preserved in Dr. Watts's version:

No prophet speaks to calm our woes,
But all the seers mourn:
Nor is there one amongst us knows,
The time of thy return.

him;

him; and imparting to him the majestic and dreadful designs of his justice and power: his desolating judgments upon the wicked cities; the temporary hell that he was about to kindle upon the earth: manifesting the most wonderful condescension, and confidence, on his part; and giving the patriarch an opportunity of addressing him in the very finest form of intercession; and which, for the proportionate honours it does to the greatness, purity, and mercy of God, may be held forth to imitation for ever.

When the fiery vengeance was ready to descend, God notified it to Lot by an embassy of angels; who, with friendly violence, drew him from his dwelling; and hastened him beyond the limits of the devoted plain; assigning as the cause, ‘that they could do nothing till he was departed;’ and making their vehement, and forcible methods to save, keep pace with the impatience of destruction for receiving and executing their commission.

With Moses, ‘God spake as a man speaketh to his friend.’

Daniel

Daniel had an angel sent to him, who accosted him with the honourable salutation of a 'man greatly beloved of God.'

These men, together with Job, Noah, and Samuel, were, for their superior worth, constituted and acknowledged mediators between God and other men. 'Go to my servant Job; he shall pray for you, and I will accept him:' and the power of their intercessions is sufficiently set forth, when in after times it is represented as what would have been then overcome by nothing, but that which almighty goodness itself was obliged to yield to; that is, the incorrigible wickedness of the Jewish people: 'Though Moses and Samuel stood before me; though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in the land, my mind could not be towards this people: their righteousness should deliver only their own souls!' How much is attributed to holy men, to shew us their high account with almighty God! They 'open and shut heaven;' and restrain the arm of deserved vengeance! such superior interest

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with

with God does surely include sublifting friendship.

This was the original state of man: he was obedient, and God was friendly. Rebellion on the one part, and displeasure on the other, came in afterwards; and were not from the beginning. God made man for friendship with himself; to adore him for his perfections, and bless him for his works; to lift up to him an admiring and a grateful eye, and to receive his visits and his commands with reverence, and a devotional pleasure; and while man continued in honour, it was so: from heaven to Adam's garden, was a frequented road: and man met his Maker with confidence and joy: till transgression induced fear and shame, concealment and flight: then, afraid of God, and unhappy in himself, he sought to hide, from a once welcome presence, amongst the trees of the garden.

But God sought the fugitive; and continued the friendship that was forfeited. He dealt tenderly with the first transgressor, as he ever has done with all succeeding

ceeding ones. 'Who told thee that thou wast naked?' Whence this self-despiciency, this sense of lost innocence, honour, and happiness? 'In the cool of the day,' the emblem of rebated displeasure *, God came to deal with his disobedient creature; and to tender him a blessing, when he was vainly endeavouring to hide himself from a curse: and accosted him with a promise, the developement and accomplishment of which make up our Gospel; which is all comprised in the glad tidings, that 'God is in Christ, reconciling the world to himself:' God preached this doctrine to Adam; and the Gospel of Jesus preaches it to his children.

* The pleasing turn of Dr. Grosvenor, 'Temper of Jesus, 17.' seemingly suggested by the following lines of Milton:

Now was the Sun in western cadence low
From noon; and gentle airs, due at their hour
To fan the earth, now waked, and usher in
The evening cool, when, he from wrath more cool,
Came the mild judge, and intercessor, both,
To sentence man.

Par. Lost, x. 92—6.

It is 'the design of christianity' to establish friendship with Deity; and to settle the most amiable and advantageous measures of it between God and man. Christianity is the means whereby God works, for rooting out of his human creation all enmity to him, and to his laws; and in a proportionate degree, all infelicity. So far as its doctrines have their influence, and its proposals acceptance, man possesses the honour and happiness of his first estate, and the world is a paradise not entirely lost. We have the divine communion and fellowship, which were the glory of that primæval condition. 'If any man keep my words, my father will love him; and I will love him; and we will come unto him; and make our abode with him.' 'He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the father and the son:' the presence, the fellowship, the love of both. We are 'sons of God,' in receiving of Jesus Christ: 'sons and daughters to the Lord Almighty,' if we come out from a prophane world, and perfect holiness in his fear. If we escape
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the pollutions that are in this world through lusts, we are ‘partakers of a divine nature:’ and by the spirit of love, the spirit of christianity, ‘dwell in God, and have God dwelling in us.’ Surely these expressions denote that union with Deity that may be called friendship! ‘I will dwell in them; and walk in them; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.’ The Gospel designs friendship with God; and the spirit of it is that friendship.

CHAP. III.

OF FRIENDSHIP ON GOD'S PART: OR,
THAT GOD IS A FRIEND TO US.

THIS is the voice of nature and scripture; the language of heaven and earth; and the uniform testimony of every creature. The most glorious and excellent God, addresses us by each; and says, 'call me friend!' The declaration should inspire us with joy and confidence, and make the strongest and grandest impression upon our spirits.

Creation arose from his boundless benignity, and is at once the evidence and gratification of it. A lovelier thought cannot enter the heart of man, than is conveyed by the hymn of the celestials: 'Thou art worthy to receive glory and honour, for thou hast made all things; and for thy pleasure, they are, and were created!' All was made from, and for,
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the pleasure of a benevolent God; in unsolicited, self-complacential goodness; delighting in its own purposes, and satisfactorily resting in its own productions. With what an additional charm does this thought deck the creation! God's goodness was gratified, as well as man's happiness served by it. The creation should be further endeared to us by this consideration, and we should have a greater delectation from every thing that we see, and enjoy.

The prophet, meaning to do an exclusive honour to the power and wisdom of God, in creation, asks, 'with whom took he counsel, and who instructed him,' in that amazing work? Creation is all his own, in point of beneficence also. God's goodness had, and needed, no other cause. All is to be resolved into 'the good pleasure of his goodness.'

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As men call up their contrivance and skill, and use care and exactness when employed about some darling and long meditated object; God is described as doing the same in his formation of the

world. 'He measured the waters ; meted the land, and spread his line upon it.' All was to be done in order and fymmetry, and becoming that great and almighty architect, who, to exprefs the proportion of his works, as well as the power of his hand, is faid to have 'weighed the mountains in fcales, and the hills in a balance.' In fuch felf-complacency did God design the world, and with the fame complacency beheld the ftructure of it, when compleated according to the model that his wifdom drew : and as men felicitate themfelves upon the accomplifhment of a favourite undertaking, and blefs the day that brought it to perfection ; fo God blefled both his work, and the day on which he refted from it. And as at firft, fo ftill, 'God rejoices in his works : ' and his joy, and his glory, in them, fhall endure for ever : for notwithstanding all its fins and calamities, its varieties and contrarieties, to this day, 'his glory is in all the earth.'

The creation of man efpecially difplays the benignity of God. It is difplayed in
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the pattern after which he is formed. 'Let us make man after our own image!' Man was to be not only God's work, but his image: not only his creature, but his child; a partaker of his intelligence, and capable of his converse and blessedness: and the production was according to the pattern; 'so God created man in his own image: in the image of God created he man!' Besides dominion over the creatures, which God specifies as his image, and by investing him with which he adorned man with a flower of his own crown, he made him like himself, as in intelligence, so in choice, or liberty of will; in executive powers for reducing his purposes and intentions into act and exercise; and in a capacity for governing the inferior faculties: made him innocent, and with a possibility of continuing so.

David viewed his own frame with admiration, as a monument of divine goodness as well as wisdom, and therefore commanding both wonder and praise: and Job, with apparent reverence of himself, but a greater reverence of his Maker,

prefaces his admiring contemplation of his own form and figure with this most suitable acknowledgement ; ‘ thy hands have made me, and fashioned me together round about !’ Here, is both a confessing of the author, and a magnifying of the work : none but thou couldst have made so excellent a creature. After these examples, let us learn to reverence God’s workmanship in us : if we consider what is external in our make ; what is internal ; what is useful ; and what ornamental ; we shall discover the highest indications of power, skill, and goodness that are divine ; and shall not refrain from that curious wonder, and devotional gratitude, of which we find so many expressions in the Bible. In his present degeneracies, and imperfections, man is stiled ‘ the image and glory of God,’ and demands and deserves self-contemplation, and self-attention.

The original disposal of man shews that he was dear to God ; and the object of the Creator’s especial regard. ‘ The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there he put the man that he
had

had made.' This conveys the idea of peculiar beauty, fruitfulness, and use: of a spot distinguished, first by the divine eye, and then by the divine culture and bounty: here is a preparation, on God's part, as for the introduction of a superior and beloved creature: and what must not have been Adam's admiration at himself, and confidence in his God, when walking forth in innocence, simplicity, and a similitude of his Maker's majesty, his eye beheld and appropriated the charming scene!

'A garden, says Sir William Temple⁸, was the habitation of our first parents before the fall: if we believe the scripture, we must allow, that God esteemed a life passed there the happiest life he could give them.' 'That exemption from care and solicitude, he adds, which such a life does still afford, seems equally to favour both contemplation and health; the enjoyment of sense and imagination; and thereby the quiet and ease both of the

⁸ Spectator, and Essay on Gardening.

body and mind : for this reason Epicurus passed his life wholly in his garden ; studying, exercising, and teaching his philosophy there ; no other abode contributing so much to the tranquillity of mind, and indolence of body, which he made the chief ends of his life and lectures.'

And there is friendship in the Creator's disposal of us, as well as of the first man. Eden, indeed, is no more ; and Paradise, relinquished by Adam, is since washed away by the deluge : so far, all things are not as they were from the beginning of the creation. But let us view the world with a small share of that benign spirit in which God made it, and with half the grateful affection we owe to him, and we shall find that we have great reason to 'rejoice in his love.' 'The earth hath he given to the children of men ;' and a magnificent gift it is ; and a comely and delectable dwelling. The material world is a stately and lovely fabric ; the brightness of its Maker's glory, and the image of his perfections : for combined ornament and grandeur, it meets
the

the prophet's description, 'Beauty set in Majesty:' and its benefits and blessings correspond to the richness and fulness of their source; the unlimited goodness of God. Behold the world, at that early and blessed hour when the passions of men are not awake to agitate it, nor their iniquities active to defile it, and all will appear tranquillity and felicity.

When the day-spring from on high visits us through the tender mercies of our God; and light, like a golden cordial, pours itself over the creation:

When the disorders and woes of one day are past; and those of another not fully come:

When the mad joys of wine are over; and they that have made a noise through wine, are sunk into stupefaction and silence:

When revel has dropt her tumultuous tongue; riot reclined her tired and frantic head; and the wolves and lions of mankind, like the lions of the wood, have gathered themselves together, and laid them down in their dens, from the face
of

of that witnessing morning that is as the shadow of death unto them :

Before the statesman rises to embroil the world ; or the children of the world begin their emulous and distracting struggles ; seeking every one his gain from his quarter :

Before Mammon opens his temples to the hasty steps, and eager desires, of his wakeful, anticipating votaries :

Or pride sows her contentions, and puts forth her foot, to crush or vex the humble and the poor :

When we rise at the voice of the bird ; and before the beast, that has forgiven and forgotten his yesterday's sufferings, renews his subjection to the sorrowful empire of man :

At this early and blessed hour, the world appears as God made it. Paradise is not lost ! The sins and miseries of six thousand years, have left no vestiges behind them ! We see the recent impression of the Creator's hand upon his works : we have his benediction over them in our ears : we partake of the complacential
satisfac-

satisfaction that he expressed; and say, 'all is, indeed, very good!' 'His glory is in the heavens, and his mercy in all the earth!'

High and admiring thoughts of the world, and the God that made it, there have been without the advantage of the Bible; and the correct and elevated sentiments and forms of praise, which that contains, to the great Creator. The heathens have expressed their wonder, thankfulness, and triumph. Cicero calls nature, and the works of nature, 'the proofs, the master-pieces of divine art;' and makes man born to contemplate, imitate, and wonder at the world⁹. The like complacent

⁹ *Ars divina.* Ipse autem homo natus est, ad mundum contemplandum, imitandum, et mirandum. (*De Nat. Deo. ii. 14.*) By 'imitating' the world, I suppose, he means, bringing the order and beauty of the material world into our moral conduct: he has a familiar passage in his treatise de Senectute. 'Credo deos immortales Sparnisse animos in corpora humana, ut essent, qui, cœlestium ordinem contemplantes, imitarentur eum vitæ modo atque constantia: or he may mean to recommend an imitation of God by the expression; many philosophers, as he in that book informs

cential thoughts and views of the world, and similar professions of, or calls to, admiration and delight in it, we find in other writers'; and we should not come short of their just sentiments, nor disregard their reasonable suggestions. Paul conveys his sense of the beautiful and harmonious effects of creating power, by saying, the worlds were 'framed' by the word of God: a word that denotes the excellent order that appears in the visible system: and it is worthy of observing, that the very 'name' of the world, in the language of the ancients, imports it to be a system of regularity, symmetry, and beauty. 'The Greeks called it by a word, that with them was 'ornament;' and the Latins, by one which they used for a

informs us, holding the world to be God. 'Mirandum,' in the above quotation, is not in every copy of Cicero; but is in some.

¹ Seneca has the words, *animus contemplator, admiratorque mundi: alio, cœlum, sidera, lunamque miramur.* We believe in God, and a providence from the things that we 'wonder at;' said a Greek writer.

'neatness'

‘neatness’ and ‘elegance’ of form, figure, or apparel².

Fond Atheist! could a giddy dance
Of atoms, lawless hurl’d,
Produce so regular, so fair,
So harmoniz’d a world?

Why do not Arab’s driving sands,
The sport of ev’ry storm,
A palace here, the child of chance,
Or there, a temple form?

A God! A God! creation shouts,
A God! each insect cries:
He moulded in his palm the earth;
And hung it on the skies.

Let us make man! O voice divine!
And stamp a God on clay;
To govern nature’s humbler births,
And bear an earthly sway.

He said: with strength and beauty clad,
Young health in ev’ry vein;
With thought enthron’d upon his brow,
Walks forth majestic man!

² So Pliny remarks: *Equidem et consensu gentium moveor; nam quem ‘κοσμος’ Græci, nomine ornamenti, appellaverunt, eum, nos, a perfecta, absolutaque elegantia, ‘mundum.’* The last word, and some of its varying forms, are used for the exactness, delicacy, and beauty of female attire. *Mundum: munditiæ.*

Around

Around he turns his wond'ring eyes;
All nature's works surveys :
Admires the earth, the skies, himself;
And tries his tongue in praise :—

“ Ye hills and vales, ye meads and woods,
“ Bright sun, and glittering stream,
“ Fair creatures ! tell me if you saw,
“ From whence and what I am !

“ What parent power, all great, all good,
“ Do these around me own ?
“ Tell me, fair creatures, tell me, how
“ To adore the vast unknown !

“ By whom ye crop the flow'ry food,
“ Or through the forest stray ;
“ By whom I feel unknown delight,
“ And drink the golden day !

“ Gay are the sunny plains ; how fair
“ Each tenant of the shade ;
“ And something whispers me within,—
“ All these for thee were made !

“ What parent pow'r, all great, all good,
“ Do these around me own ?
“ Tell me, fair creatures, tell me, how
“ To adore the vast unknown !

“ Who gives the wondrous tongue to sound,
“ The wondrous eye to see ;
“ Who gives the amazing thought to soar,
“ The amazing soul to be !”

And

And as the 'beauties,' so especially the 'bounties,' of the world, shew God to be the friend of man. As he has reared for him a delectable dwelling, he has also filled it with good things. How liberal a provision is everywhere made for human happiness; in heaven, and earth, in air, and sea: how liberal a provision, and how constant! 'My father worketh hitherto, and I work!' Jesus had cured a sick and lame man: the Jews, with that littleness of mind which always sticks close to precisions and hypocrites, who magnify the observance of days and times, and the performance of a rite, above the substantial acts of piety and charity, objected to him, that he had healed on the sabbath-day. Jesus thus answered their cavil: 'divine benignity keeps no sabbath:' nor ever has done, from its first institution, at the beginning of the world! God has always so far dispensed with his own command, as to give his goodness its energy and influence on the sabbath, as well as on other days: and I am herein the image
of

of his tender mercies. 'The son of man is greater than the sabbath;' and 'Lord of the sabbath-day;' making its prohibitions and rigours, bend to those benefits of soul or body which it was originally appointed to befriend! A divine sentiment, and worthy the lips from which it dropped.

'If,' says Mr. Addison, 'we consider the world in its natural beauty and harmony, one would be apt to conclude it was made for our pleasure; but when we consider it in its subserviency to man, we see that it is made for our use.' All is contrived to serve us, as well as to please us; the earth yields her increase, as well as exhibits her attractions and charms. See the perpetual agency of God for the support and comfort of man; for him the rains descend; and the dews fall; and the grass flourisheth; for man, are the fields covered with corn; and the cattle upon a thousand hills fed. God feeds the inferior creatures, that they may minister unto man: and they meet our necessities, and furnish out our entertainments, and render us their different

ent and peculiar services, as if by a designed appropriation and a common agreement : no previous cast of characters, and offices, could have produced a lovelier variety, and juster assortment of benefits from them. ‘ Not a sparrow is forgotten before God :’ and this, because man is remembered : so that in the issue, all the tender mercies of God that are over all his works, do terminate in us : and we say of every support and blessing vouchsafed to the creatures beneath us, ‘ that is mercy to me :’ an effort of the Creator’s kindness to make my life in this world desirable and happy to me.

Besides the mercies that ‘ come with observation,’ how many are there that steal upon us in silence ; insinuate themselves into our very frame ; and imperceptibly refresh and bless us : overlooked for what should make them the most noticed : their speedy return, or rather their uninterrupted perpetuity ? Life is God’s gift and favour ; in its hourly duration, as truly as in its first bestowal. It is the breath of the almighty that is in us : and he continues

tinues our breath ; and feeds us with bread : and we live by his blessing, as well as by his bread. The refreshment of our sleep, as well as the nutriment of our food, is his vouchsafement ; and is attributed to his benignity. There is a constant visitation of God that preserves our spirits. We live under the protection of his wing, and upon the too unheeded provisions of his bounty. He is with us in every place ; and we know it not. His left hand is under our head ; his right hand embraces us ; and his banner over us is love, at all seasons ; and when we are not apprehensive either of his kindness or his presence. That God is near, his sustaining influences do every moment declare ; and we should hear their small, still voice, as well as the louder calls to acknowledgement and thanksgiving, that are made by great and special benefits and deliverances.

What have we that we have not received ? What is it we eat ; what is it we drink ; what is it that clothes us, warms us, nourishes and delights us ; are not all the vouchsafements of our divine benefactor ;

factor ; that while we are candidates for a better world, we may have suitable comforts in this ! There is nothing in our possession, nothing in our houses, but we may write upon it, ‘ From above : from the father of lights ! His good and perfect gift ! ’ so men inscribe each other’s tokens of remembrance and love ; at once owning the giver, and taking pleasure in the gift.³

God is the friend that gives us all things with the purest intentions ; not to ensnare, but to bless us to the utmost. When it happens otherwise, the cause and the blame is with ourselves. We put a sting to the honey, and a thorn to the rose, of the delights which he sends us ; and he gives with pleasure to himself, as well as with purity of design to us ; and with self-gratulation in all the exertions of his goodness, as previously determined, and as actually made : so he took pleasure in making the world, in giving it to man ; and in the enjoyment it afforded him. Hear how God proclaims himself : ‘ the

³ Donum Amici :

Lord that created the heavens: God himself that formed the earth, and made it: he established it; he created it not in vain; he formed it to be inhabited!

Besides fulness and sufficiency, there are in all the works of God such marks of his disposition to entertain, as well as to serve us, by them, as greatly demand our wonder and our joy.

‘Trees pleasant to the sight, and good for food,’ were what he first planted Paradise withal: and he still keeps the same union of beauty and use: in some instances to a degree of enchantment! Why must one object please so many senses: and with service in one article, charm us in many more? Why must the pine and the peach have shape for the fancy, colour for the eye, and fragrance for the smell, as well as richness and deliciousness for the palate; and the pear and the apple be flowers, before they are fruits? Why must that, which at its perfection is our food, first constitute a garden of beauty, or a field of perfume? Why must the numerous progeny of
goodly

goodly creatures whom God has consecrated to our use, and subjected to our dominion, have figure to attract, as well as strength to support? The answer is plain; because a good God made the world; who desires to endear himself to us, in every blessing that he sends us; and who means delight, as well as advantage, from every object that surrounds us. The embroidered coats and skins of animals; the rich and various plumage of birds, must be attributed to the same benevolent cause. Before they 'give us their flesh to eat,' they delight us with their delicate or majestic forms; their variegated, and infinitely changeable hues; or their cheerful and melodious songs: and the fluttering insect, and the creeping thing, has its glossy black, or scaly gold, in which to please and shine upon our sight. The birds of the heaven sing among the branches: 'and if it be true, that the first notes of music were learnt from theirs, how great an advantage and favour is it, to have so many little masters of melody in our service, without having them in our

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pay!'

pay !' Beauty gives additional acceptableness to benefit and worth: even virtue itself is said to be the more engaging in a comely and well framed body⁴. Let us feel the sentiment here; and appreciate the services tendered us, by all beneath us, under the direction of it. It is a sentiment that has been felt by philosophers; and prettily expressed by poets; who have magnified their ready and emulous attentions and offices, by the gayness of the liveries which they have shewn and performed them in⁵. It is most evident goodness in God, that the same living creatures that are made for our sustenance, should raise pleasing ideas in us by the delightfulness of their appearance. The same kind attention to us has God preserved in the inanimate part of the creation: 'fountains, lakes, and rivers, are as refreshing to the imagination as to the

⁴ Gratiores et pulchro veniens in corpore virtus.

Virg. v. 344.

⁵ Certavere feræ, picturatæque volucres,
Dona suo vati quæ potiora darent.

Claud: ad Serenam.

foil which they pass through.' Blessed God! why are we not kept in a general enthusiasm of admiration, delight, and gratitude, surrounded as we are with the multitudes of thy loving-kindnesses? Let no gloom gather about my mind, to hide from it the benignity of thy nature and provisions for me! Let no cares of this life, make the love and loveliness of thy creation be vain unto me!^o!

Too often it is so. Divine goodness, with all its self-evidence, cannot force conviction; nor, with all its power, enter our souls with comfort. Man walks forth at the brightest seasons, and at the happiest

^o Some of the Psalms celebrate the transcendent grandeur and awful magnificence of the works of God: others their consummate beauty; infinite variety; curious arrangement; beneficial uses; and apparent designed subserviency to the delectation of man, as well as the glory of God. Some are pastorals; and superior to those of the Roman poets which are most admired. They were written by men of sentiment and devotion; and may be read with great advantage, for that liveliness of spirit, and well-pleasedness with the world, that we ought always to preserve. See Psa. viii. lxx. civ. cxlv.

hours, insensible of all that surrounds him. A glorious world is lost upon him! Some care corrodes his heart; some disappointment sits heavy upon his brow; some fear or desire, some uncertain interest or honour, engrosses him, and depresses him; and hides God and his good things from him. While pride, or ambition, or covetousness, make their claims and stimulate us to their objects and measures, nature will inspire no serenity, nor afford us any enjoyment: the sun will shine in vain; flowers disclose their sweets, and open to cheer us in vain. We have repellents, within, to all that strives to bless us without. We turn from the objects which God and nature set before us, for our establishment and delectation, and converse only in the disquieting region of our own vain imaginations; and we feel the sad, though natural issue. Let us see the friendship that God has for us in his works; and let us read it in his word: he has contrived for our serenity and joy in all things: and we owe much to his divine wisdom and goodness, that he has
done

done it in those things that are most obvious and common; so that we need but open our eyes, to be in a measure cheerful and happy. It has been remarked, that the 'blue' that arches the sky, and the 'green' that carpets the ground, are the most enlivening colours; and that strengthen and refresh the eye, instead of weakening or grieving it. This looks like the kind disposition of the Creator of all; that whether we raise our eyes to his habitation, or confine them to the surface of our own, we should meet a united benefit and pleasure. God has not exempted the world from imperfections and sorrows; but his presence is its consolation; and his mercy its medicine. One of his names is, 'he that hath mercy on his servants!'

With his works and his word we ourselves witness, because we experience it, that God is the friend of man.

Love is his essence, as well as his name: his paths are mercy: his thoughts are precious: his benefits, the fruits of his thoughts, are multitudes: more than we

can count for number, or set in order for variety. When we awake we are still with him: his, is the light of the morning, and the friendly shade of the evening. His friendly counsels guide us: his friendly rebukes awaken and correct us: 'as many as I love, I rebuke and chasten:' he leads us through all our uncertainties; and is better to us than our fears; carries us above trouble as on eagles wings, or hides us from it in the secret of his presence: in sickness he is near us; in death he is with us; he keeps us from both, or causes that neither shall do us any harm.

When death has set up his pale standard, and sure of victory, began to triumph in his spoil: when the faded form, and fainting heart, have announced a speedy failure of the flesh: when the blood has forsaken our cheeks; the pulse weakened and slackened in its movements; and the lips been forced to drop the words of devotion or friendship they would have uttered; God has come to us in the character and power of, 'the preserver of men:' stopped the conflict, and displayed

played afresh the ensigns of life: we continued the living, the living, to praise him; and with such deliverance from death, he may have made another deliverance to follow: deliverance from the fear of death; so that it may be, we can now look down with composure and courage, into that grave that was once dismaying and affrighting.

And in the interval, between the sicknesses God has raised us from, and that sickness which, when it comes, will be our last, we have his promises to sweeten life; to support us under infirmity; to cheer and invigorate age; and enable us to meet death with steadfastness and tranquillity.

The 'laws' of God, as well as his providence, and its kind and endearing measures, shew his friendship to man.

Disobedience to heaven was soon followed by outrages upon earth. The cry of injury was soon heard in the tents of Adam's children: they doing violence to one another, as he had done violence to God and to himself. Instead of renouncing the care of a rebellious race, and

leaving their passions without check or punishment ; he interposed with his positive law against murder ; given in terms of condescension and goodness, that ought very much to impress us. ' At the hand of man, at the hand of every man's brother, will I require the life of man : who so sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed : for in the image of God made he man ! ' The ground of this law was man's enmity to his own species, which manifested him to have become a most depraved creature : yet the benevolent Creator acknowledges his image in man, sunk as he was ; owns the natural when he had lost the moral image. The image of God, though then impaired and defaced, was not to be touched with impunity.

Of the same friendly nature with this express and positive law, are the several strong invisible restraints which God has laid upon the spirits of men ; and which they are usually held under ; and kept from destroying and injuring one another by. There are impressions stamped upon
man

man which are called, 'the laws of nature.' Paul intimates, that for their strength and clearness, they are sufficient for those who are under no express covenant to be governed and judged by. Now these are all written on the heart by the finger of the great legislator; and as the tendency of them is to keep the world in order, they must be acknowledged so many marks of his care for man; that his existence in this world may be rendered safe and secure to him. To strengthen these original impressions, is one great end of religious institutions. We are to establish and improve upon the laws of nature, by the law of Christ. That man finds himself under an inward restraint from doing evil; that he has a disposition to do good; that he has love in his bosom; that he is under the impulses of compassion; that he feels sympathy; that he is tender of property, chastity, and reputation; and that he fears an oath; all are instances of the goodness of God, and his friendly regard to the race of man.

‘Redemption,’ most of all, evinces the friendship of God for men.

‘He remembered us in our low estate, according to his mercy that endureth for ever;’ and having at no time, and by no decree, appointed us to wrath, sent us salvation by Jesus Christ. This is the greatest proof of God’s love, and should conciliate ours. Indeed, this unspeakable gift of God is described as sufficient, not only to conciliate our love to him, but to constrain and force it. ‘One of the poets,’ says an excellent writer⁷, ‘hath an ingenious fancy to express the passion wherewith he found himself overcome after a long resistance: saying, that the God of love had shot all his golden arrows at him, but could never pierce his heart till he put himself into the bow, and darted himself straight into his breast. This doth some way adumbrate God’s dealings with men: he had long contended with a stubborn world, and thrown down many a blessing upon

⁷ Scougal’s *Life of God in the soul of man*.

mortals ;

mortals; and when all his other gifts could not prevail, he at last made a gift of himself to testify his affection, and engage theirs.' God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son! So loved! the matter is represented in this indefinite form, as if to leave all men amazed; and to supply, from their own imaginations, that greatness of munificence which he could find no words to express.

We have 'redemption,' even 'the remission of sins:' and the fulness of the remission is implied in the terms by which it is declared: 'removed as far as east and west: to as great a distance as heaven and earth: not remembered of God: cast behind his back: buried in the depths of the sea: sought for but not found: done away as a cloud!' 'I, even I, am he that blot-teth out thy transgressions for my name's sake!' The great God coming to us with such words as these upon his lips, shews friendship unquestionable. This is 'redemption begun:' the completion of it is eternal life.

And now what is the inference? what, but that as the heavens do not confine God in his friendship, the earth should not confine us in ours: and that since heaven is described as the place of his most glorious residence, we betake ourselves thither, with our love and praise, our dependence, trust, and complacency, and all those virtuous and devotional qualities, which are more particularly described in the following Chapter.

CHAP. IV.

OF FRIENDSHIP ON OUR PART: OR,
WHAT MAKES US FRIENDS OF GOD.

SECTION I.

*Of Reconciliation to God as the Foundation of
Friendship.*

‘**R**ECONCILIATION’ to God, carries in it an implication, that there is such a thing as ‘enmity’ to him in the world: and heinous as the guilt, and dreadful as the charge, it is but too true that there is. In contemplation of divine holiness and goodness, Jesus said, ‘O righteous Father, the world cannot hate thee!’ A fair presumption; and in the pleasure and rapture of a devotional hour, an irresistible conclusion: but this same Jesus did also say, ‘ye have both seen and hated both me and my father:’ and Paul, in his

black catalogue of offenders has these, ' haters of God.'

The Atheist would destroy the existence of God: and this is the very height of enmity: of enmity not to God only but to men too: whom he would rob of all heavenly protection; and of the only sure ground of joy, trust, and hope. And the enmity of the Atheist, both to God and men, appears the more unpardonable, when it is considered for what purpose it is conceived and maintained; even that he may enjoy his own guilty security: live with the sensuality of a brute, or the malignity of a devil, and then die in despair, and have no one to call him to an account. For so worthy an end, the world must be without a ruler, and man without a God. God must lose his throne, that he may break the orders of it; and the virtuous part of the creation must lose its heaven, that he may escape his own deserved hell. What is this but the most provoking enmity first against God, and then against the best interest, the natural hope, and the true honour of mankind! And in what a

pitiful and fordid selfishness is the enmity founded! God and man, heaven and earth, must all give way, that a child of pride or oppression, of vanity or profaneness, may have his own will and course; and be free from all wise, reasonable and merciful restraint. The Atheist is an enemy to his own stock and race, as well as to his Maker; and the opposing of his debasing tenets, and disconsolate system, should be made a common interest and cause. 'The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God.' He is to be opposed on a double account: both as a fool and an adversary.

But enmity to God is not to be confined to the Atheist and the blasphemer: there is no occasion to deny God, burn the bible, and do an outrage to all that is sacred, to become his enemy. The imputation falls upon other characters, the sound of which do not shock and alarm us in an equal manner.

There is the libertine: he would take the sceptre out of God's hand; and controul his natural and just authority, whenever

ever any foolish or wicked lust claims the gratification.

The revengeful man would take the sword out of the hand of God, as the libertine would the sceptre: he would invade the tremendous prerogative which God Almighty exclusively claims: 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.' So far as his own interests go, he would be ruler, judge, and executioner: to the neglect and dethroning of the supreme ruler: the processes of whose government, his passion, his humour, or his honour, will not let him stay for.

The unforgiving man is an enemy of God, as neither minding his rule, nor following his example of forgiveness. 'Let not the sun go down upon your wrath!' Here is a limitation of our anger, and a presumed tendency of the scene to extinguish it. One setting sun is enough to tranquillize the most disturbed and resentful bosom.

When I think of that one line, 'he maketh his sun to arise on the evil and the good;' and see this minister of his Maker's
love,

love, after having communicated the fulness of his influence, retiring in all the mildness of majesty ; and with infallible certainty of returning to cheer and bless me as before ; can I stand untouched with his unwearied goodness ; and without the calm which his withdrawing, awful, bounteous, presence creates ? or shall I keep up the meridian heat and torment of malignant passions in my own soul ? Ye ‘ children of wrath,’ take your walk at evening tide ; and see if you can withstand ! His unsufferable brightness puts out all other fires : let his setting mildness and greatness, extinguish or cool the rages and fervours of your little and guilty hearts !

Among the enemies of God, I reckon the hard-hearted man : who never knew what it was to do good to men for God’s sake : though often entreated by that very consideration. ‘ He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how shall he love God whom he hath not seen ? ’ With such a person all goes into the whirlpool of selfishness : nothing passes his hands, by
way

way of gratitude to God, or charity to men.

And what are all unthankful and ungrateful men, but enemies of God? Paul ranks these also with the very worst of finners. 'Unthankful, ungrateful.' Their alienation from God increases with the number and value of his favours. Thus are God's benefits and blessings perverted from their proper and intended use. God means to allure men by them to his interest and service, and men take occasion from them to desert his interest and service: he means them as so many motives to obedience; and they disobey with the higher hand.

The covetous man's name is followed by a dreadful appendage. 'The covetous whom the Lord abhors!' Such declared abhorrence on God's part, must infer great guilt on man's. Paul proclaims every covetous man an idolater: and what is enmity more than idolatry; which is moving God to jealousy, by giving his glory to another; and, in the present instance,

stance, transferring to gold that reverence, dependence, and trust, which are due only to infinite power, perfection, and goodness. 'They say unto gold, thou art my hope; and to the fine gold, thou art my confidence.'

All competitions are offensive according to the inferiority and unworthiness of the opposed object or character. God himself speaks with similar just resentment: 'they have moved me to jealousy with them that are no gods.' And what rival does the covetous man set up? Who, and what is his Deity? Not the brightness of the firmament; or the stars that are for ever and ever: not the sun travelling in the greatness of his strength; the God of Persia and the East: not the moon walking in brightness; the queen of heaven, who setteth her troops in the stories of heaven; moving in conscious beauty, and seeming to indulge to the admiration that she challenges: not the hosts of heaven, nor the most magnificent things of the earth; not the ancient mountains, the everlasting hills,

or

or the great and wide sea⁸; but 'Cæsar's image and superscription:' gold, loved for its own sake, and not for its designed uses: and therefore equally loved in every form; whether as the sleeping medal, or the circulating coin; whether bearing the impress of Titus, the delight of human kind, or of Caligula, or Nero, the scourges and curses of it: the metal all; wanting no consecration of impressed characters; no concomitant or associated charm; nor losing endearment and value from bearing names and faces, whose crimes will for ever be remembered at the sight of them⁹.

Besides

⁸ 'Mountains have that which is august and stately in the beholding: that inspireth the mind with great thoughts and passions: and we naturally think of God and his greatness.' The Romans made a God of Tellus, or the earth. Ocean was a God; and the father of the Gods. The Egyptians worshipped their Nile; and the Indians their Ganges.

⁹ And round about him lay on every side
Great heaps of gold that never could be spent!
Of which some were rude ower, not purifide
Of Mulciber's devouring element:

Some

Besides that, covetous men have great infelicity in their unworthy desires, and misplaced affections, they have God's displeasure; they experience their leading views to be wrong; and they feel themselves unhappy; but have no conviction of their spirit and temper, being matter of frown and punishment.

The men of pleasure and dissipation, are reckoned harmless characters: 'no ones enemies but their own.' Yet the scripture impleads them also as enemies of God: and very justly: their pleasures having that supreme attention and affection which are due to God alone. We read of 'lovers of pleasure, more than lovers of God;' and such a preference can never subsist with duty. Consider what the preference consists in: time is devoted

Some others were new driven, and dissent
Into great ingots, and to wedges square:
Some in round plates, withouten monument:
But most were stamp'd, and in their metal bare,
The antique shapes of kings, and Kefars strange
and rare.

Spencer, *F. Q.* ii. 7.

to

to pleasure more than it is to God. Money is more devoted to pleasure. Self-denial is more submitted to for pleasure than for God. What if God required of men as much as pleasure does? What if God required us to be up all night, and sick all day, for his service? What if he drove us through noon-day heats, and midnight damps? What if his service broke in upon the hours of rest and refreshment; and allowed but transient slumbers, and hasty meals; and we, after all, found ourselves deluded into the bargain; and mocked with repeated disappointments? We should call God a hard master; but we take all this from pleasure; and pay her compliment, as well as yield submission! We appear obliged to her, for wearing our spirits; and wasting our flesh; consuming our substance; and destroying our souls!

In addition to the above characters, there are the proud, whom God knoweth afar off: the lying lips, that shall be put to silence: the false balances, and them that hold them; which are an abomination unto

unto the Lord: and the unrighteous, that shall not inherit his kingdom.

The life of every disobedient person is a continual resistance to the laws and commands of God. And what is resistance but enmity? A kind of enmity that is severely threatened and condemned: 'Woe to him that striveth with his Maker!'

I need not instance, in particular classes of offenders: all sin is enmity to God; and every sinner is an enemy: so Paul states the matter. 'Enemies in your minds to God, by wicked works.' And God is, on his part, an enemy to sinners. Angry with the wicked every day. A permanent anger: called in the emphasis of scripture, 'the wrath of God abiding on them.'

There is no one perfection in God, however excellent and admirable, but sinners are enemies to: they would disarm him of his power, because they know they have incensed it against them, and that it is too hard for them. They hate the unlimited presence of God, which is the consolation and triumph of the righteous, because

because it follows them into the secret recesses of their iniquities: they cannot endure his holiness, though it is the ground of confidence in his government, because it is contrary to, and will condemn their unholiness: and as to his very goodness, which they have so much occasion for, and will sometimes affect to magnify, they treat that both with neglect and contempt; to their Maker's displeasure, and their own aggravated guilt. 'They despise the riches of his forbearance and patience; thus treasuring up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath.' Friendship with God supposes reconciliation to him as its foundation; reconciliation to his existence, perfections, and government; so that we have nothing to object to either; but are perfectly well pleased that there is a God, and that he is such a God as his word describes him.

In order to 'reconciliation,' to God, we must have these notions of enmity to him:

'It is unreasonable.' To be an enemy to God, is to hate light and love darkness:
to

to loathe beauty, and disrelish harmony : to fly in the face of goodness and patience ; and to be averse to perfection itself : it is to strike at the power through which we live and move : and to direct our breath, and lift our hand, against him who gave and continues the use of both : ‘ The upright love him : ’ and ever have loved, and ever will love him : and nothing but guilt, that all-perverting thing, can make to him a foe or an alien.

Enmity to God is also a ‘ destructive ’ thing : it will provoke his displeasure ; and then our wretchedness is completed. Consider what an adversary God may become, if we make him one ! His wisdom will discover and despise all our folly. His power can always command instruments for punishing our affronts. His very goodness will condemn us for the abuse of it. His truth will accomplish all his threatenings. His eye will find us out wherever we go : and his eternity can give an awful permanency to his displeasure ! A man is angry with me, and he dies : but ‘ it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the

living God :’ who can destroy both soul and body ; and who, it is intimated, will do it, if we persevere in a causeless, and guilty hostility against him.

SECTION II.

Some other Articles which constitute Friendship with God on our Part : or by which we approve ourselves Friends of God.

KNOWLEDGE—CHOICE—DELIGHT.

I. Knowledge is the foundation of all valuable human friendships. We make friends of those in whom we discern great and amiable qualities, and our esteem and attachment is proportioned by them.

God has all excellencies, and we should discern and know them ; that we may be attracted by them ; and blessed in them. ‘ Acquaint thyself with him ;’ for thine own good, as well as duty, is concerned in it.

The more clear and comprehensive our knowledge of God is, the more shall we see of the desirableness of his friendship :
and

and the more applaud ourselves for entering into the bonds and obligations of it: and shall charge it upon ourselves with increasing solemnity and earnestness, 'my soul, wait thou only upon him!'

The knowledge of God should be an object of natural desire to man: we are his offspring: and it should be our first request, 'shew us the father.'

And yet God is but little known in the world; nor do men choose or care to know him: 'they like not to retain God in their knowledge.' With all our creeds and formularies, he remains too much 'the unknown God' amongst us. Careless men know just enough of God to displease him: to make free with his name, and shew their pleasantries at the mention of his perfections and providence: and as to men of more consideration and collectedness, in the general, we find but little of a proper sense of God upon their spirits: few grave impressive notions of Deity, that have a happy influence upon duty and comfort: and so they lose the pleasure which a right view of the greatness and gloriousness of

the divine attributes would give them; and are so far 'without God in the world,' as to experience a great deal of that infelicity which the suitable apprehensions of him would have kept them free from.

And, as I have hinted, mens' ignorance of God is not unavoidable or necessary, but affected and chosen. 'Of this, they are willingly ignorant,' says Peter: of this, of what? Of God, as the Creator of the world, and the Creator of themselves. Some men will admit any absurdities into their heads, rather than admit God into their hearts. The world shall be made by chance, or be eternal; and so not made at all; rather than God shall be owned for the architect. There shall be no governing providence, rather than he shall have the direction of it. No future rewards and punishments, that he may be shut out from the distribution of them. They will moreover groan under any burthens, rather than so far admit a God, as to invoke him for their deliverer. The affected ignorance and wilful neglect of God, in this matter, is well described in the book of Job:
' they

‘they cry out by reason of the arm of the mighty; by reason of the multitude of oppressions; but none saith, where is God my Maker?’ Nature itself dictates, ‘cry to him for help who gave thee life:’ but here are men who would rather perish under others’ severities, than own a God above themselves, and above their oppressors. Such chosen ignorance of God is a most debasing crime of humanity: a most notorious violation of the law, and duty of our creation.

Friendship with God supposes the knowledge, and the pleasant acknowledgment of him.

We should be willing to know God, and take pains to know him; ‘seeking after him, if haply we may find him:’ making those continued endeavours that constitute ‘the following on to know the Lord:’ how excellent he is in himself; how related to us; and how suitable a portion for us.

The knowledge of God is enriching to us. This is life eternal. Suitable ideas of infinite power, goodness, wisdom, and

faithfulness, will ennoble and adorn our spirits; and God himself allows us to glory in the possession of them: 'let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he knoweth me; the attributes of my nature, and the methods of my government.

Let us contemplate, and use, all the works of God, as means for attaining the knowledge of him; and helps to us for acquiring it. Every devotional man does. 'To him there is a transparency in every thing, through which the divine artificer shines: to him, the works of God are so many windows, for letting in the most captivating beams of his perfections: while to inconsiderate and sensual men, they are so many curtains, for shutting God, and his perfections out¹.'

'Every thing great and beautiful in the creation, should bring the image of God to our minds: for he is the first cause of all things; and the existence and excellence of every thing else, is only the effect, pledge, and proof of his existence and glory².'

¹ Mr. Mead.

² David Hartley.

To a devotional mind, the world is ‘a book of meditation; and furnishes a psalm of praise:’ the grazing beast and chirping bird, bring to remembrance that bountiful Lord, ‘who gives to the beast his food, and to the young ravens that cry.’ The painted flower exhibits the heavenly wisdom that contrived its tints and colours; and is endeared to it for its Maker’s sake, as well as for its own.

Thus God in ev’ry creature shines,
Fair is the book of Nature’s lines;
But fairer is the book of grace.

For it is from the word of God, that we derive our fullest, and most delectable knowledge of him: those views of almighty power, transcendent mercy, tender compassions, and long-suffering patience, that create a heaven of tranquillity, delight, and confidence within us; and supply strength and consolation, for cheerful obedience.

‘Have I been so long time with thee, and yet hast thou not known me?’ God has been long time with us, by his won-

derful works and tender mercies: never far from us: let us dread the imputation and charge of not knowing him.

II. Choice, or selection, is one of the first steps and acts in human friendships; and it is so in the divine.

Man is a sociable creature: he has a natural propensity to society, and converse: his qualifications for society, shew that he was intended for it: and friendship is the directing and determining this propensity to society in general, to some special preferred individual.

Friendship with God is the choice of him, in the room of any, and above every creature.

God is 'worthy' of our choice. 'I am the almighty God!' Here God speaks of himself: and he speaks like himself: with a divine greatness, and all-sufficiency. His perfections contain all that we can imagine: and more than we can imagine: all knowledge; all goodness; all happiness; all that is desirable, of whatever kind; and in the greatest possible degree. All other objects of our choice are inadequate

quate to our necessities and satisfactions; but 'the portion of Jacob is not like unto them.'

God is the 'suitable,' as well as the worthy object of choice to us: and, therefore, if we choose him not, we do an injury to ourselves, as well as put a slight upon him. A man may lament his own condition, if he does but duly apprehend it: inasmuch, as though there is but one perfect being, but one satisfying good, but one suitable and all-sufficient friend of mankind, he makes no choice of him; and therefore has no portion in him.

Wise and good men think of the choice they have made of God, with full approbation of it, and of themselves: no repentings here: 'O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, thou art my Lord!' And they glory in it, as well as approve it: exhibiting the great object of their choice, to the view and admiration of all: 'Lo, this God is our God!' 'Our God is in the heavens, he hath done whatsoever he pleased, and can do whatsoever we want.' This God! see how excellent he

is, and how secure and happy we must be in him !

The adorable God 'offers' himself to our choice : he 'claims' it : and he 'expostulates' with us as to whom we would choose to the neglect, or in preference of him. 'To whom will ye liken God, and to what similitude will ye compare him?' 'My son, give me thine heart!' 'Choose whom you will serve' and trust ; me, or vanity.

The choice of God, as our friend and portion, is 'justified' by the commands of scripture : by its representations of God : by its congratulations : and by its declared experience of righteous men : the fountain of life is said to be with him ; and fulness of joy in his presence : he that has God for his help, and whose hope the Lord is, it pronounces happy : and they that have tasted that the Lord is good, bless every man that trusts in him like themselves.

A choice of God, as our almighty friend and sovereign good, let us make : let us repent of every unworthy choice we may have

have made against him, or in preference of him: and adopting the sentiment and saying of the penitents in *Isaiah*, confess and resolve: 'O Lord, our Lord, other Lords, besides thee, have had dominion' over our understandings, our affections, our submissions, and our services; but we will now make mention only of thy name.

III. Delight, is a part, and a blessing, of human friendship: by that we express it; and evidence the sincerity and strength of it: and it should evidence a nobler friendship; and bless us in the maintaining it.

God is worthy of being delighted in; which every mortal friend is not. There may be great qualities to excite esteem: shining talents to raise admiration; and a good heart to engage confidence: and yet, that may be wanting that is necessary to produce delight. But God is a friend every way delectable: and they that know his name, 'drink of the river of his pleasure.'

We are commanded to delight in God: and a promise is annexed to the command: 'delight thyself also in the Almighty, and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.' It is so much the will of God we should do it, that he will grant us all we can ask for it. Let us lay our minds open to those impressions that God's perfections, providence, and government must make upon every good and attentive mind, and then delight in him will be irresistible: and will spring up in our bosoms of itself; without our wanting a positive command to cherish it. Think of God: not to be troubled, but gladdened.

'It is the good-natured advice of an admired ancient, to think over the several virtues, and excellencies of our acquaintance; when we have a mind to indulge ourselves and be cheerful.' With him, it seems, friendship made one common stock of virtues and excellencies; that each one of the band might take the satisfactions of as he wanted them. If such a festivity is furnished to us from the recollection of
human,

human, scanty, excellencies, how much more must the remembrance of God, and of his perfection please! 'If the fancied presence of distant friends affects our minds, and raises our spirits, both in thought and action;' in what greater degree should not that real presence of God, which surrounds us when we think of his glories, exalt our minds; and fill us with strength and triumph! Are the great and good qualities of a friend so far my own, that I can cheer a gloomy hour with them, and with his imagined company; what greater joy should I not allow myself, in that higher Being that is ever at my right-hand; and in whose perfection I am so interested, as to be taught to call it my own; to all the purposes of protection and happiness! We may make God an exceeding great joy to ourselves: and, that peace, which passeth all understanding.

Delight in God is the evidence of a religious spirit; and distinguishes the sincere soul from the hypocrite: 'will he delight himself in the Almighty:' he may think

think of God with dread ; mention him with seeming respect ; serve him for an interest ; and come to church for fashion ; to get on in the world, or to get off a dull and heavy hour ; but as to delight in God, his nature, and will, dominion, and providence, he is no such friend as that comes to.

In human friendships, the delight is mutual ; and, wonderful as it may seem, it is so in the divine. ‘ The upright are his delight : their prayer, and their prosperity, is so : he taketh pleasure in them that fear him ; and his countenance doth behold them ; ’ as we direct our eye, and keep it fixed, upon what gives us any particular especial pleasure. The lofty, holy, happy Jehovah, has his delights with the children of men ! Let all the sons of God sing together ; and, like the morning stars, shout aloud for joy !

SECTION III.

*Some further Articles of this Friendship: or by which we
approve ourselves Friends of God.*

DEVOTIONAL INTERCOURSE: CHEER-
FUL SERVICE: PERSEVERING AND
UNCHANGABLE CONSTANCY.

IV. Devotional intercourse. This follows from that delight in God which has just been treated of. 'Delighting ourselves in the Almighty,' and 'calling upon God,' are therefore put in close connection: the one very naturally producing the other.

We do not long refrain the converse of those we delight in, if we have liberty of indulging in it. Complacency in the heart will respire through the lips; and where God is the object, will teach the tongue the language of adoration and prayer; of gratitude, thanksgiving, and affiance.

The communication of sentiments, and interchange of endearments, are the greatest

est advantages and blessings of friendship ; and without opportunities for them, the improvements of the understanding, and the virtues of the heart, would afford a very diminished satisfaction³.

This has its parallel in divine friendship : and mutual communication is maintained in that ; by devotional sentiments, affections, and exercises, on our part ; and by condescending goodness, on the part of God : called, ‘ a meeting of him that worketh righteousness ; and them that remember God in their way : ’ a ‘ bowing the heavens, and coming down.’

God allows us in the spirit, and agreeably to the laws of friendship, to come near unto him, even to his seat ; to order our cause before him ; to fill our mouths

³ Si quis in cœlum ascendisset, naturamque mundi, et pulchritudinem siderum perspexisset, insuavem illam admirationem ei fore, quæ jucundissima fuisset, si aliquem, cui narraret, habuisset. Sic natura solitarium nihil amat, semperque ad aliquod tanquam adminiculum annitur : quod in amicissimo quoque dulcissimum est.

Cic. de Amicitia, § 23.

with arguments ; and to plead his power, his faithfulness, and his goodness for our security or our deliverance. This is called in the Psalms, ‘ a pouring out the heart before God :’ not that he wants any information from us, as to our circumstances, prospects, or state of spirit : ‘ I know thy work, and labour, and patience :’ he knows all in us, and all about us : but that such communication is suitable to the hope we have in him ; and the dependence we have upon him. God ‘ allows’ us devotional intercourse with himself, and he ‘ commands’ it : ‘ call upon me in the day of trouble :’ and he ‘ encourages’ it ; assuming such names as, God of our life ; God of our mercies ; God of our hope ; God of our salvation ; the Comforter of them that are cast down ; our tender Father, and faithful Shepherd. Our prayer is so acceptable to him, that he takes one of his titles from his readiness to hear it. Our tears, whether of penitence or sorrow, he is said to put into his bottle ; our silent weeping has a voice that reaches him ; and the sighs that escape us, from oppressing

pressing and inexpressible grief, come up before him. Our grateful acknowledgements, he dignifies with the name of praise; and accounts the impotent breath with which we render them, an addition to his glory. 'I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me:' by adoring sentiments; by pleasing reflections, on my power, wisdom, and faithfulness. Let it endear the God of heaven to us, that he will take any part of his glory from us; and that such addition to his glory should arise from any devotional frame and posture of our spirits!

The maintaining this devotional communication with God, which he allows, encourages, and thus wonderfully honours, is friendship with him; and is the characteristic and joy of every good and rectified mind.

The wicked call not upon God; and restrain prayer, and every devotional exercise before him. From them, no thanks that God is at hand, to be praised, or prayed to; to inspect their spirits, or receive any expressions of love and duty. Satan called to the sun, to tell him how
he

he hated his beams⁴: so would a child of Satan, in the spirit, if he had but the desperation of his father, tell God himself, that he hated him; his perfections; and his government; they being all against his guilt and safety. Give me a corner, wrap me in a cloud, encompass me with darkness; let all sight of Deity, and communication with him, by some means or other, be intercepted! 'Cause the holy one of Israel to cease from before us;' said a rebellious people to their prophet: remove the glorious object out of sight: his brightness and purity confound us! But it is the consolation and triumph of the righteous man, that heaven is always open, and God always near; that his mind may at all times meet the great parent mind; and that, by divine omnipresence and influence,

⁴ O thou that with surpassing glory crown'd,
Look'ft from thy sole dominion like the God
Of this new world; at whose sight all the stars
Hide their diminish'd heads; to thee I call,
But with no friendly voice; and add thy name,
O sun, to tell thee how I hate thy beams.

Par. Lost, iv. 32.

heaven

heaven and earth are made to be one : he is glad that there is such a thing as devotional intercourse with Deity to be had ; and he resolves to maintain it.

I shall only under this head exhibit the king of Israel, as an example of that converse with God, which I am describing as a branch of Friendship with God. As for me, I will call upon God, and the Lord shall save me : evening and morning, and at noon, will I pray and cry aloud, and he shall hear my voice. He resolved, that in this most noble and most pleasing employment, he would prevent the morning, and that he would wait for God to speak to him, and do homage at his throne more than they that waited for its earliest beams : I say more than they that wait for the morning. Nay, midnight was to be witness to his adoring dispositions and expressions : my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips, when I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches. He coveted the sanctuary for the sake of its divine inhabitant, and welcomed its services with the most pious and exalted

exalted affections. How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts! my soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God. One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple. When shall I come and appear before God?

V. Friendship with God includes our cheerful service done to him, and for him.

It enters into the notion of friendship, that we serve and assist each other to the utmost of our power. Properly speaking indeed, our divine friend needs no service, and can receive no assistance from us: it must be of his own that we give him. The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. God that made the world, and all that is therein, seeing he is Lord of all, dwelleth not in temples made with hands, neither is worshipped with mens' hands,

as

as though he needed any thing : the fountain of life is with him ; the fountain from whence we all participate. But God puts this dignity upon us, that he asks our service, and challenges our assistance. Who is on the Lord's side ? Whom shall I send with my messages and instructions, and who will go for us ? As he dignifies what we say of him, and to him, with the name of praise, so he dignifies what we do for him with the name of service : and he calls it not only service, but honour ;—Them that honour me, I will honour. There shall be honour for honour, only of a more excellent and valuable kind. If any man serve me, him will my father honour. And shall we refuse our service to God, our divine friend, when he puts it upon the footing of our doing him honour ? It is not because he wants us, but because he would do us a favour, by employing us, and by receiving from us again, as our gift to him, that which he first gave us : as a prince or a noble honours a poor peasant, by first enabling him to offer gift and service, and then condescendingly

scendingly accepting, and kindly rewarding it. And what should be the return, I will not say of our generosity, but of our equity? Should it not be 'Lord serve thyself of me, and by me, as thou shalt please: my body, my soul, my time, my liberty, my life, all are thine; all were given by thee, and I would keep back nothing from thee.' This is the language of friendship, and it should be our language to our high and everlasting friend: we receive from him upon all occasions; we constantly lean upon his power; derive from his bounty; serve ourselves of his creatures; and are replenished out of his fulness: and shall we not serve his cause? Shall we enjoy breath and being from him, and yield back nothing to him? Is this thy kindness to thy friend?

VI. True friendship supposes persevering and unchangeable constancy: and this must enter into our friendship with God.

God is constant in his friendship for us: his promise is, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee: and his conduct is of a piece
with

with his promise: for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee. Let us be constant in our friendship to him. We read concerning David and Jonathan, that they entered into a covenant of friendship with each other, and that they sware to that covenant. Something of this kind should pass, something of this kind has frequently passed, between God and us. Every vow, every act of self-dedication, every sacrament, is a covenant of friendship with God. The very word sacrament, signifies that oath of fidelity that every soldier took to his general. So far we have vowed unto the Lord, and cannot go back, and therefore must perform our vows. I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.

Constancy and perseverance in our friendship with God, is every way advisable. He is necessary to us, and we cannot do without him: that is one reason: ‘ O keep thy God thy friend, for most
‘ certain it is, thou wilt have occasion for
‘ him again, and thou knowest not how
‘ soon :

‘soon: keep thy interest in him, and ‘*estrangle not thyself from him*’^s. It is very unreasonable and foolish, when a present turn is served, to desert God, as though we should never want him again: as though we should never more be in necessity, fear, or trouble. We shall want him as our friend in every step and stage of our journey through life: we shall especially want him at death, and the approach of eternity: things that will come, and must be provided for. The keeping our interest in God as our divine friend, will always be an advantageous, and therefore a wise piece of conduct. This is the good part that shall never be taken from us. Here we shall always be on the right side, for as God’s cause must be triumphant, his friends must always come off with honour. Behold, all they that forsake thee shall be ashamed: but steadfast adherence to God is equally our duty and our glory. ‘They shall not be ashamed in an evil time, and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.’

^s Lord Chief Justice Hale’s Contemp.

Of this steady, persevering, unchangeable constancy, the true servants of God, and more especially his suffering servants, have been examples. Hence sprang the noble deeds and wonderful achievements of that bright list of heroes which is given us by the writer to the Hebrews. The whole life, of those men upon earth, was one continued struggle with such evils as are most terrible to the apprehensions of mankind: but they waxed valiant in the fight by keeping near to their divine leader: the storm that was raised to drive them to a distance from him, drove them so much the closer to him: and they behaved themselves, in all respects, as became the heirs of that most excellent portion that they looked for: shewing us, and all the world, how to live as seeing him who is invisible: and choose present afflictions, rather than sinful pleasures, from a respect to God, as the rewarder of them that seek him.

But when I am enumerating the things which constitute us the friends of God, it would be a manifest omission not to exhibit

hibit the distinguishing and characteristical virtues of Abraham, to whom this title, friend of God, was originally given. This I will do in the following section.

SECTION IV.

The characteristical Virtues of Abraham, the Friend of God.

FAITH—RESIGNATION—ZEAL.

God would no more destroy the world, but reform it. Abraham is chosen as the head of the family and nation, in which the true knowledge and pure worship of him should be preserved: and is commanded to leave his own country, a country of idolators; and go to a land which was to become the scene of most splendid heavenly dispensations.

This patriarch stands at the head of both covenants: the christian being only the continuation and perfection of the Abrahamic: and he is so far the father of us all. It is no foreign or alien matter then, for us to enter into the particulars of his venerable character; and there is an especial propriety in doing it, when

we are considering what virtues will entail upon us his name, friend of God.

‘Faith,’ was his first, and most prominent virtue.

Faith signifies, a strong and steadfast belief in God; as the maker and ruler of the world: whose presence pervades, and whose wisdom guides it: who works all things according to the counsels of his own will; true to his word, and good to the righteous. This was Abraham’s faith: a comprehensive, noble, influential principle: for its fruits it was imputed to him for righteousness; and obtained for him his honourable and singular name. He is stiled, ‘the father of them that believe;’ and ‘faithful Abraham.’ ‘By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out to a place which he should afterwards receive for an inheritance, obeyed, and he went out, not knowing whither he went.’ The original call to which these words refer, you have in the book of Genesis. ‘Now the Lord had said unto Abraham, get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and thy father’s house; and get thee

thee unto a land that I shall shew thee!
and I will make of thee a great nation:
and I will bleſs thee, and make thy name
great; and thou ſhalt be a bleſſing. And
in thee ſhall all families of the earth be
bleſſed.' This is the promiſe that was
made to Abraham, when he was firſt
called to ſet out; and it was renewed,
and amplified to him, when in the land of
Canaan, in this lofty and munificent way.
' Look now towards heaven, and tell the
ſtars; if thou be able to number them:
and he ſaid to him, ſo ſhall thy ſeed be!
Thou ſhalt be a father of many nations:
a father of many nations have I made
thee: kings ſhall come out of thee: and I
will eſtabliſh my covenant between me
and thee, and thy ſeed after thee in their
generations; for an everlaſting covenant;
to be a God unto thee, and to thy ſeed
after thee: and I will give to thee, and
to thy ſeed after thee, the land wherein
thou art a ſtranger: all the land of Canaan,
for an everlaſting poſſeſſion; and I will be
their God ⁶!

⁶ See xii. xv. xvii. Chapters of Genefis.

What a conveyance is here ! This is a deed of inheritance, that makes all rolls and charters, all bequests and transfers of estates and dominions, thrones, principalities, and powers, look minute and beggarly ! Whom will ye liken to this father of nations ; made so by the sovereign of all nations : the grant still good : the line still extant : the right indefeasible : the children of the promise, at some future glorious period, to recover and retain to the end of time ; the gifts and callings of God being without repentance !

Here is a promise, seemingly like to sink under its own weight : by its magnitude, to preclude faith and shake hope ; and, by exceeding, kill all expectation ! To believe himself a father of nations, and to anticipate to himself a posterity, numerous as the stars of the heaven, or the dust of the earth, while as yet he was childless, and likely ever to remain so : to appropriate Canaan to this his promised seed, while he himself was but a pilgrim and a stranger there, without a foot of ground that he could call his own : and to look
forward

forward to their safe and advantageous settlement there, after many wonderful previous changes, and a bondage of four hundred years: What dependence upon God! what persuasion of his faithfulness and power must not all this argue!

Abraham, however, believed God, and obeyed: confided in his protection, and believed him faithful who had promised: and under the impressions of faith and piety, 'departed as the Lord had spoken to him; and Lot went with him; and all their substance that they had gathered; and all the souls they had gotten in Haran: and they went forth into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came.'

And when got to Canaan, the sacred historian takes notice of the pure humility, and the self-annihilation, that Abraham preserved. 'By faith, and with all this faith in his soul, he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country.' 'I am a stranger, and a sojourner among you,' said he, when he stood up before his dead;

a correct, elegant, and sentimental mourner. My Lord, thou art a mighty prince among us: said the children of Heth: he takes no name but stranger. How different is the greatness which religion creates in the soul, from that which worldly advantages communicate. It fills the mind, without inflating it; and suffers nothing self-sufficient, or unsuitable, to escape it.

Let into the vast and transcendent designs of divine Providence; standing at the head of a new divine dispensation; to open in that Canaan, into which he was now brought; and which had been given to him and his posterity, by the great sovereign of all things; how natural and innocent, if not comely, might not some modest assumptions have appeared: some indications of his apprehended future greatness: some anticipations of the deeds and achievements of his posterity: some symbolical appropriations of the land; and intimations of his children's conquest of it, and property in it? These things
we

we find in familiar circumstances, in ancient poetic description⁷; they are allowed to be natural, and they offend not, but please. But nothing of this kind is seen. 'I am a stranger among you: I have no property; and will not have a tomb among you, but by purchase: Sell me the cave of Macpelah.' See the amiable reserves of faith and piety! The original in the grant, dwelling in a tent, where his children were to have a city of foundations: 'dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise:' and who lived and died with a simplicity, and faith, like his own; persuaded of promises which they did not receive. This faith of the patriarchs was common and hereditary. Some, that did not die in Canaan, would have their sepulchres there; as an evidence of their belief that God would, at the appointed period, give their descendants that inheritance of it, that themselves could not possess. 'Bury me with my fathers, said Jacob, in the cave that Abraham bought:'

⁷ Virg. *Æn.* viii.

and he was carried out of Egypt to it, according to his direction: and Joseph, making mention of the departing of the children of Israel, gave commandment, 'Ye shall carry my bones from hence:' and took an oath for performance. No mausoleum, or pyramid, amongst the kings of Egypt, where he himself had been a king, and even a God unto Pharaoh, was so coveted by him, as his length and breadth in the promised land; the future glorious scene of divine power, truth, and goodness. 'Here is the faith and patience of the patriarchs!' 'Here are they that keep the commandments of God;' and believe his word: every indication of assistance in him is pleasing⁸.

Abraham's

⁸ Perhaps, faith, as well as fancy, might be concerned, when a late daughter of Israel ordered her remains to be conveyed from the great city to Jerusalem for burial. She might do this under a persuasion of the restoration of the Jews to Palestine, as the Patriarchs did it in belief of their original settlement: if so, it is well that she had fortune to aid her faith; and do as that directed: and it is not a child of Abraham, only, that will find himself impressed with the recital.

'A rich

Abraham's faith we must have, if we would approve ourselves friends of God, as he was: and our faith should operate, as his did: that is, it should reconcile us to all God's commands to us, and disposals of us, and make us willing to meet any changes, under his promised protection and provision. All the changes of place, habitation, employment, and friends too, should be willingly submitted to, and acquiesced in, so long as we have reason to believe that we are under the order and guidance of our Almighty friend on high. He can command us no where, but he can take care of us; for the world is all his own; and every creature can be

'A rich Jewess, of St. Mary Axe, who died a few days ago, made a singular will. She directed her body to be buried in Jerusalem; and twelve Jews, who were to accompany it, to have four hundred pounds each for their trouble: two on departure, and two on their return to England, after executing their commission. This will is to be literally obeyed; and the body is now ready for departure, with all its funeral honours.'

Whitehall Evening Post, Dec. 24, 1795,
and other prints of the time.

made a minister of his providence. He can provide a table in the wilderness: and satisfy, as with marrow and fatness, where we should fear the being destitute of all supply. There is pleasure in the thought, and to God there is infinite ease in the work. Let us then not look at any circumstances of apprehended hardness or grievousness that his calls may in their first aspect wear; but let us look at the power, truth, and goodness of him that makes them. How strong, how numerous, and undescrivable, are the bands that attach us to old friends, accustomed dwellings, and especially to native soil⁹; and yet all these bands have been broken with safety, and advantage too, where the happier band of divine favour has remained strong and sure. No connections, dwelling, or country, limit the holy one of Israel, or bound his communications of goodness. We have a dwelling-place in him, everywhere, and in all generations: we have a

⁹ Nescio qua natale solum dulcedine mentem,
Tangit, et immemorem non finet esse sui.

OVID.

home

home wherever his eye, providence, and mercy reach. Let us not straiten him who has never straitened himself. Is a 'brave' man at home everywhere¹, much more is a 'good' man. Our abode can never be made wider than God's bounties; nor cast beyond the limits of his vouchsafements. He is now near at hand; and he will be with us when we are afar off. Let us have an amplitude of mind, correspondent to the amplitude of his goodness; and we shall no where be forsaken. Let the divine love that goes beyond the bounds of our habitation, release us from all slavish fear in passing them; and inspire us with a generous confidence in him, whose eyes are in every place. One spot has been rendered happy to us, by divine favour; another will be made so: both should appear alike good; and we should not dread the one, nor cling vehemently

¹ Omne solum forti patria est, ut piscibus æquor:
Et volucris, vacuo quicquid in orbe patet.

OVID.

to

to the other². The pilgrim patriarchs, had pilgrim affections: they pitched their tents, and struck them; with equal readiness and satisfaction; persuaded of God's presence attending them in every stage of their pilgrimage; in the next, as much as in the present; or the past: and we shall make all the removes and changes we are called to make in this world, with similar facility and pleasure, if we have but their just conviction of a universal presence and protection; care and goodness: and withal, a due sense of our being sojourners on the earth, as they, and all our fathers were.

We may have some changes to make in the world, as long as we live in it. When we think ourselves most established, the

² Should fate command me to the farthest verge
Of the green earth, to distant barbarous climes,
Rivers unknown to song —————

————— tis nought to me;
Since God is ever present, ever felt,
In the void waste as in the city full:
And where he vital breathes, there must be joy.

THOMSON.

disposals

disposals of Providence, like a voice behind us, may say, 'Arise, and go hence!' And if it should, only let us obey in the spirit of Abraham's faith, and then, whether we know, or like him, do not know, whither we go; comprehending more, or less, of God's purposes and measures towards us, we shall, in the issue, find that they have all been worthy of his wisdom; and declared kind attention to us. He can serve our happiness in one place, as well as in another; and perhaps best in that which we think most disadvantageously, and unfavourably of. The safety of Abraham, in obeying an extraordinary divine order, and his after prosperity for his obedience, are proposed for the encouragement of his children, in all their uncertainties, hesitations, and fears: 'look unto Abraham, your father: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him.'

II. Resignation was another eminent virtue in Abraham's character. The wonderful instance of it, which is recorded, is the readiness he manifested to offer his son, in sacrifice, at God's command; that son,
the

the gift of whom was the beginning of the fulfilment of God's comprehensive promise to him, and upon whose life the complete fulfilment absolutely depended. 'By faith, Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he that had received the promises, offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, that in Isaac shall thy seed be called.' What an act of Friendship to God, and trust in him, was this! In proportion to the degree of our friendship with men, we resign ourselves to them, and put our all into their hands: in our carriage towards our great and heavenly friend, our resignation should be entire; because his goodness and wisdom are infinite. He first gave us all we possess, and still knows how to make the best use of all, both for us and for himself. He takes as well as gives with the kindest intention, and therefore is in each case equally intitled to our blessing him. It was spoken like a friend, though he slay me, yet will I trust in him. I will put my life in his hands, nor abate my confidence if he take even that away. Consider the circumstances

stances of him who made this noble declaration. His substance was destroyed: his children were slain: his body tormented with the ingenious cruelty of a devil: and nothing was left him but a few false and mistaken friends, some of whom tempted him to renounce his religion, and others would have persuaded him that he had no religion to renounce: at one time urging him to revile his God, and at another to revile himself: and yet, in the midst of all these trials, Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly. - Acknowledging God's right to all, Friendship must not be offended if he take some. There is a speech of the pious Archbishop of Cambray, that might have come from the inspired volume. 'If there needed no more than to move a straw to bring him back to life again, I would not do it, since the pleasure of God is otherwise ³.'

When David and Jonathan had made a covenant of friendship with each other,

³ Said concerning his royal pupil, the Duke of Burgundy.—*Life of Fenelon.*

the next thing we read is, that Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle. He gave him all he had, whether for covering, ornament, or defence. Something of this kind should be our behaviour towards our divine friend. We should be willing to strip ourselves of all mortal advantages and delights for his sake, holding nothing too dear to part with at his bidding ; nothing our own when he calls for it from us : and this in imitation of the resignation and Friendship of the Redeemer of mankind, who stripped himself to clothe us : emptied himself to fill us : put on our nature, that we might be adorned with the divine excellencies of his. ‘ Brethren, ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who when he was rich, for our sakes became poor, that we by his poverty might be made rich.’ Resignation is the true temper of christianity ; it is that taking up the cross of Christ, without which we cannot be worthy of him : and it is moreover the certain mark of a great
and

and heroic mind. To be excessively clinging to our mortal comforts, as if a separation were our inevitable and immediate destruction, argues a little mind, that has never been enlarged by the hope of eternal objects: but when we can quit the beaten road of present self-seeking, and self-gratification, which most men walk in, and in a steady and placid manner subject the disposal of all our blessings to the God who bestowed them all; this is a great spirit; it is that overcoming both the world and ourselves, which is the highest victory we can attain in our militant state here upon earth, and which shall be followed with the hundred-fold restitution of all that we now lose in heaven.

Resignation, has respect to 'privation,' as well as 'loss:' and should be preserved by us, as to what is 'denied' us, as well as what is 'taken from' us. We should submit to God when he 'withholds;' as well as when he 'withdraws.' This virtuous men do; through that abstemiousness of desire that is the result and dictate of genuine goodness. Good men are generally

generally satisfied with much less than others are. They covet not as others do: nor lust, as they lust: and visible, and interesting is the contrast, between the bold and impetuous presumptions and demands of insignificant, and even vicious characters; and the moderation, acquiescence, and subjection, of those, who in the estimation both of God and man, have the fairest and justest claims upon the world, for all that it can do for their happiness, during the short time they have to live in it.

Resignation is most reasonable. It is due to the supremacy of God: and besides making us happy, is truly ornamental. How pleasing is a subjection to the father of spirits! A good man is lovely in prosperity: gratitude to God, and the good fruits of righteousness to men, growing out of it; and being incorporated with it. And resignation makes him lovely in adversity: clothed with that, he is 'not found naked;' however stripped of any mortal delights. Trouble comes to him, as the tempter did to Jesus, but 'finds
nothing

nothing in him:’ no turbid sediment at the bottom of his soul, which moved, or stirred, occasions ferment, and gives him an unlovely or disgusting appearance. Trouble clarifies, and dignifies him: he attracts veneration; and seems to stand in a hallowed circle, commanding a respectful and a revering look. Such is the resigned, afflicted righteous.

How different the unsubdued, and refractory wicked! A wicked man in adversity, is a man striving with God; resisting his will; and gainsaying his providence: what should subdue him, enrages him; and like the smitten, irritated savage, he is the fiercer for every stroke: he at last dies in a storm: and his turbulent soul leaves his body under the impressions of the wretched conflicting passions that had agitated and tormented it!

That we may have the blessing, and ornament of a resigned spirit, when we come to want it, let us in time get the grounds and principles of it established within us.

Nothing can be done in a minute:
would

would the mariner, when the tempest comes, have to get his tackle from land to weather it? The world is an open sea; agitated, as it has always been, by the passions and vices, the extravagant lusts, and the contending interests of men. Religion furnishes with compass and ballast, and every article for guidance, security, and defence. Paul speaks of a whole armour of God, wherewith we may stand in any evil day; and with the anchor of hope, and the breast-plate of righteousness, prescribes 'the gospel of peace:' or the peace and tranquillity, which the gospel settles in the soul of man. 'Have your feet shod, says he, with this preparation;' better able to keep them unhurt in a thorny and rugged path, than the gold or brazen shoes and sandals of ancient heroes and warriors. The armoury, where all the articles of defence he recommends, are prepared and kept, is always open; and we may provide ourselves with them, as we want them; and with resignation, and the principles of it, among the rest.

III. Zeal was another distinguishing
virtue

virtue in Abraham's character: Zeal for God and his honour amongst men.

Zeal is inseparable from true friendship. What! is it my friend's cause? I'll serve the cause of my friend to the utmost of my power. And this should be our resolution with respect to God our almighty friend on high. God himself bears testimony to Abraham on this head. He gave this as one of his reasons for communicating to him the terrible judgments he was about to execute upon the ancient sinners: Shall I hide from Abraham the thing that I am about to do? And why not from Abraham as well as others? It was because of the good use he would make of the intelligence, and the manner in which he would apply it, for the spreading a reverence for God and his government, all around him. 'I know him, and he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment.' I know Abraham: I can trust him for so doing. Almighty God has a cause in this apostate world:

world: and he expects that we defend and serve it: and we shall do so, if our friendship for him is sincere. Our pen, our purse, our learning, our authority, all the several advantages of our stations and callings, must be directed to this end. To enlighten the ignorant, to reclaim the wicked, to convince gainfayers, confirm the wavering, and encourage and strengthen in the road to eternal life: this is zeal for God; and attention to the best interests of men; and if we are friends of God, we shall be the friends of men, in our conscientious and diligent attention to these things that belong to their peace and salvation. Our serving his cause, is our honouring God; our neglecting to do it, he resents, and will punish: and how justly! A liberal and ingenuous person would be very deeply wounded by such a recrimination as this, 'You have not used me well: you have not treated me like a friend!' Let us take care that the great God have not any such charge to bring against us. A friend, and see my service declined, my name dishonoured, my authority

thority trampled upon, and my bounty perverted and abused! No care to promulge my laws, to assist and comfort in the observance, and to correct in the violation of them!

We have the perfections, providence, and government of God to vindicate and honour; not amongst heathens and idolaters; but against equal enemies, the profane and the profligate. Let us serve a cause that so much wants our help, and so much merits it.

CHAP. V.

*Some most excellent Perfections of God, which make his
Friendship most desirable.*

POWER : OMNIPRESENCE : FAITHFUL-
NESS : ETERNITY.

I. **P**OWER. This is a venerable, and
pleasing attribute of Deity. 'I
know that thou canst do all things!' God
had propounded to Job some questions,
arising out of the grandeur and variety of
his own works: 'Canst thou command
the morning: canst thou bring forth the
hosts of heaven: and bind or loose the
influences of them: will the lightnings
come at thy command: and canst thou
open or stay the bottles of heaven?' Job
knowing what all tended to, the evincing
the power of God, and the weakness of
man, in obedience and humility, so con-
fessed: 'I know that thou canst do every
thing!' And he made a similar acknow-
ledgment,

ledgment, ' If I speak of strength, lo, he is strong : and, power belongeth unto God !' Creature claims must be excluded ; all being weakness when set in comparison with his might. Besides extraordinary exertions of the power of God, which have in all ages commanded the attention and fear of the children of men, the still and uniform display of it, in upholding the frame of the earth, and the orbs of the heaven, challenges our admiration, and we may daily stoop and adore it. And in this power of God, the friend of God has an interest. God is described as in a manner possessing it for his sake, and he is encouraged to make his humble claims upon it. The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the earth, to shew himself strong in behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards him. Armed with the omnipotence of the God they served, with what superior grandeur did three youths reply to the threats of an angry monarch ! We are not careful to answer thee in this matter : our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us, and he will deliver us out of thine hand,

O king. Nebuchadnezzar's enraged and distorted visage, the most mighty men of his army that he called about him to revenge this insult, his claim of uncontrollable dominion, and his fiery furnace for all that disputed it—convey but a poor idea of greatness in comparison with this composed but elevated speech. And as in this memorable instance, so on more common occasions, he giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he encreaseth strength: he fortifies the spirits of his servants within, and carries them through and above all temptations and afflictions without: his power extends to all worlds: he can change and controul the course of this for the benefit of his friends, and he has done it in very astonishing particulars, and can conduct them safely and advantageously to a better: with him is everlasting strength: and this is what we want, because we are made for an everlasting existence. Give me the friend that can conduct me through all the changes of life, death, and the resurrection!

II. God

II. God is Omnipresent : and this makes him a most desirable friend.

Amongst men, distance makes many a break in those friendships which death will shortly dissolve. But our divine friend is ever near. We cannot see those disconsolate borders that are not filled with his presence and bounty, or from which the expressions of our duty and joy cannot reach him. A virtuous heathen once consoled himself with this persuasion, that whithersoever he should go, he should still be able to admire the works of God, and to maintain converse with God⁴. This makes every place alike good to the friend of God ; and in every place he is alike happy. His prayer can no where be lost in the wind, nor his professions of respect scattered with the dust. God is near to all them that call upon him : near to supply, near to justify them. And as his presence, so his knowledge is universal and infinite : he can judge of our appeals from men : of our appeals to himself : so

⁴ Vide title page.

that we may at all times, and in all places, have the divine satisfactions of conscious innocence, and an approving God: thou that knowest all things, knowest that I love thee.

Let us a little further indulge to the pleasure of this thought, that God is a friend ever present with us: there are several kinds and instances of solitude to which it may be most charmingly applied. Sometimes we choose to be alone, for rest of the body, or refreshment of the spirits: in this instance how pleasing is it that we have our heavenly friend with us, so as to be able to say, I will both lay me down in peace and sleep, for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety. When I awake, I am still with thee. Solitude may be chosen for improvement in knowledge and devotion: now as this solitude especially invites the presence of God, so it is made highly delightful and improving by it. Our father seeth in secret; and a good person, at such a season, has both meat to eat, and company to keep, that the world knoweth not of.

And

And as solitude may in some cases be chosen by us, so it may in others be forced upon us. There is a solitude occasioned by distance from home : by loss of friends : lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness. There is the solitude of a sick chamber : and above all, the solitude of death. Then we must be alone. I don't mean without company near us, or attendance upon us ; but without any one dying with us, and accompanying us in the unknown path to the world of spirits. No, no : dying is a transaction that passes wholly between God and ourselves : to have him then with us as a friend : to have him come to us at death, as to Paul in the storm, saying, ' Fear not, for I am with thee ! ' This is sufficient for courage, as well as tranquillity ; and for strength of heart, when our flesh fails. Art thou with me, blessed Lord ? then I will fear no evil.

III. The ' Faithfulness ' of God, is another attribute, that makes him a most desirable friend to us.

A man who was very unfaithful himself

could bear this testimony to God : ' he is not a man that he should lie : hath he said, and shall he not do it ? ' In this attestation of the faithfulness of God, there is an admitting the unfaithfulness of men. They impose upon our credulity ; fail us in our dependencies ; and disappoint us in our expectations. It is an old complaint, that the faithful fail among the children of men : but who, O Lord God of Hosts, is a strong Lord like unto thee, and to thy faithfulness round about ?

God is ' sincere ' in his friendship ; which men always are not. We believe God to be sincere from his own declarations ; and we may believe it from his all-sufficiency. He can enter into friendship with us for no reason but to bless us. Dependence upon one another, is a ground of human friendships ; but God is independent : he needs nothing out of himself : he communicates happiness, but can receive no increase to his own : his friendship must therefore be pure and sincere : and how does this prove its value !

Insincere friendships are our greatest
sorrows.

sorrows. ‘ O deliver me from the unjust, and the deceitful man:’ a petition well preferred, in all the vehemence of it; for deceit is the very greatest injustice we can suffer by; and what we cannot be provided against. We can meet the pride of man, and bow before it, and its stream may go over us, without hurting our souls. Amidst the strife of tongues we may find a pavilion for hiding; but how shall we be shielded from the secret arrows, and stiller mischiefs, of the treacherous and perfidious man. Open enemies meet us in the way, but are not in the house with us: false friends are; when their falshood is known; and themselves discarded. They can be ever with us for injury. The doors that keep their persons out, do not preclude the operations of their spirits. Their full knowledge of us, makes all ease, and success unto them. We have let them into our hearts, as well as our houses; and they have us in constant possession. If we are in the secret chamber, they are with us; if we go into the desert, they follow us; and like the presence of

God, beset us behind and before. We have no unknown or unapproachable retreat: 'Judas also knew the place!' How shall we stand against this continual all-pervading, malignant influence? It has been said, 'live with friends, as supposing that they may be your enemies.' A pitiful maxim; and fit only for a little and a wretched mind; incapable of a genuine friendship, and deserving all the vexations that it counts upon, and prepares for, from an artificial one^s.

But God is sincere. The rock of Israel will not deceive.

God is 'constant' in his friendship, as well as sincere; and this is another branch of his faithfulness. Mens affections are desultory: they profess inviolable attachments; but we often see that they should not. God's friendship remains longer than theirs: and is not broken by what destroys theirs.

^s It is one particular in the rare and excellent character of Epaminondas, that he could bear the injuries of friends. Non solum populi, sed etiam amicorum ferens injurias.

COR. NEP.

What

What sad work is often made in human friendships by causeless jealousies, evil reports, slender surmises, and the imagination of neglects and offences, which were never real; but our divine friend both knows our sincerity, and pardons our infirmity; and therefore with him we can never suffer from such causes. Above all, what bonds of faith and friendship have been broken by wants and cares, and calamities on one side, and wealth, and honour, and elevation on the other! How few will know a man in trouble, or be willing to renew or acknowledge former connection with him! 'I looked on the right-hand and beheld, but there was no man that would know me; refuge failed me, no man cared for my soul. All my inward friends abhorred me!' Job's crime was, that he was become afflicted, and poor. This made a disciple deny his master. 'I know not the man!' Not know me, Peter! You knew me once, and was forward enough to declare your knowledge: 'thou art Christ, the Son of the living God!' But now that I stand

an insulted prisoner, at the bar of the high priest, you know me not! this was Paul's case too: 'no man stood by me, but all men forsook me.' So little will the best cause secure the world's attachment to one in distress. Let Paul be in the lion's mouth; Christ near the cross, or Job among the ashes, and then, 'farewell!' Friends, and fortunes, come and go together: and none prove it more than they that have been as high as fortune could elevate them. Pompey, after his sad overthrow in battle, sits upon a solitary rock of Cilicia, to consider whither he should betake himself: and at last, upon the score of gratitude, determines upon Egypt: he had done services to the father of the infant king⁶; and presumed they would procure him a favourable reception with the son. Received from his

⁶ Tum puero quam juveni, propior. The historian makes suitable reflections: Sed quis in adversis beneficiorum servat memoriam? aut quando fortuna non mutat fidem?

VELL. PAT. II. 53. also,
FLOR. HIST. IV. 2.

own transport ship into a vessel, that with seeming hospitality had been sent to meet him, he is assassinated and slain in presence of his wife, by the apparently courteous ministers, and orders of the obliged, and therefore confided in, monarch! So he who but a little before, wanted field-room for his victories, now wanted a spot of earth for his dead body.

But 'God's ways are not as our ways;' he is with us while we are with him, whatever changes we experience. There is no variableness with this father of lights. The luminaries of heaven, as well as the men of the earth, do vary: they have their different aspects, and appearances; they comfort us with a fuller, or a fainter ray; and in their approaches, and recesses, cast their different shadows: but the father of lights, has an invariable tenour of glory and goodness; casting no shade, and suffering no mutation, from those human calamities that so much need the plenitude of his power and mercy. Trouble invites his help and draws it down; conciliates his presence, and engages his promise.

promise. 'I will be with him in trouble.' His direction is, 'Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee;' and the righteous man's resolve corresponds to the direction: 'In the day of trouble, I will call upon thee; for thou wilt answer me.' In conformity to the direction, and the resolve, a divine complacency is also expressed in the application, and the success of it. 'Thou calledst in trouble and I answered thee.' Trouble is made the plea for God's attention, and nearness to us; and vain as it often is with men, it has its power and prevalence with God: 'he is nigh unto them that fear him; he also will hear their cry, and will save them.' No place too forlorn for him to come to his servants in. He met Jacob, and David in a wilderness, and followed Joseph into a prison. He came to Paul when in the castle of the chief captain: and to add dignity to deliverance upon another occasion, shook the foundations of the place he was confined in by an earthquake. The rest of the Apostles were persecuted, but not forsaken.

faken. John, in his banishment to a disconsolate island, was entertained with the revelation of celestial glories: and Jesus, in his unparalleled sufferings, was never alone, the Father being with him. Thus faithful is God in his friendship and favour: O let us be faithful to him in return: let us not break with him, who will never break with us: and whose promise is, 'be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.'

Moreover, 'God notices, and will reward every service we do for him;' and this, with the sincerity, and constancy, of his affection for us, manifests that faithfulness of his friendship, which makes it infinitely desirable.

Nothing we do for him, is lost or forgotten. God is not so far 'unrighteous, as to forget any work, or labour, that we do for his name, under the impulse of faith and love.' Paul challenges the world to produce any instance of an ungrateful return. 'Who hath first given to him, and it hath not been, or shall not be, recompensed to him again?' 'Whatsoever

soever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord : ' a book of remembrance is written before him ; and the record of it is on high.

When Æneas, after his shipwreck, entered the temple of Juno, in the rising city of Carthage, he found the sad events of the Trojan war, and with those of others, his own actions, and sufferings, pourtrayed upon the walls of it⁷ : and, what, said he, have my name and misfortunes reached this foreign coast ? Are they written in this distant temple ? The active, and the suffering righteous will find their names, and deeds, and sorrows, recorded in a higher, and a nobler temple ; and the Lord of that temple ready to give them a bounteous remuneration.

7 ——— Videt iliacas ex ordine pugnas,
 Bellaque jam fama totum vulgata per orbem ;
 Atridas, Priamumq, et sævum ambobus Achillem.
 Constat, et lachrymans : quis jam locus Achate,
 Quæ regio in terris nostri non plena laboris ?
 En Priamus : sunt hic etiam sua præmia laudi,
 Sunt lachrymæ rerum, et mentem mortalia tangunt.

VIRG. ÆN. I. 460.

The

The faithfulness of God to his friends consists in the fulfilment of his word: the constancy of his care: the sufficiency of his supplies: the guidance of his providence; and his presence, in life and death. And in all these things, good men will own that God has been faithful to them. At the close of life, they will own, as the Israelites on the edge of Jordan were called to do, 'that not one thing hath failed of all the good things that God had spoken concerning them: all are come to pass: not one hath failed.'

'Now will they say, we see the truth of his word; and the faithfulness of his friendship. He told us that he would never leave us, nor forsake us: and he has been with us through the whole of our lives!'

'He told us, that all things should work together for our good: and we see how sickness and health, adversity and prosperity, disappointments and successes, have wrought together, for our fitness for immortal life!'

And

And when they have passed the boundary that divides the better world from this, they will renew the acknowledgement, in the fullest, and most absolute terms.

‘ He bade us rest persuaded that death should not separate us from his love : and we have seen it harmless ; and got safe beyond it.’

‘ Now we especially acknowledge the invisible hand that sustained us, and the faithfulness that has blessed, and exalted us ! We have passed the confines of death ; we have found the path of life : we have deliverance, and wait that morning, when the upright shall have the dominion !’

Only let us be steadfast, immoveable, and always abounding in his work, who in his faithfulness will recompense our labour. God will drop none at last that have maintained a course of duty and service for him. Men, indeed, have often dealt so by one another. There have been those who have made a fellow-creature

ture in the room of God to themselves. They have courted his favour, watched his smiles, and walked before him with an idolatrous obsequiousness; and all to be cast off at last: and, when too late to betake themselves to a better master, they have lamented their ill-directed ambition; their ill-placed hope; disappointed expectations; and ill-requited services: and have declared those higher, and worthier thoughts of God, which never gave the lead in their conduct. ‘If I had served my God as faithfully as I have served my king; he would not have left me in my old age and extremity, as the other has done!’ So Wolfey, an ambitious ecclesiastic, and statesman, of our own country, breathed out his soul in sorrow and despair. Feuillade, a minister of the great Lewis, departed with a like self-recrimination. ‘My God, have mercy upon me: why have I not done for thee a thousandth part of what I have done for the king?’ When hated by the court, he soon lost the king’s favour. Things are the
same,

same, we see, everywhere. Men find but broken cisterns, when they leave the fountain of living waters: rejection and disgrace, when they leave the fountain of honour.

IV. God is an everlasting friend: and this makes his friendship to the utmost degree desirable.

Hear and bow at his majestic name: 'the king eternal, immortal, invisible!' unchangeable life is a most glorious attribute. This shews unquestionable divinity. Living and true are therefore joined together in the scripture accounts of the most high Jehovah. The Lord is the true God; he is the living God, and an everlasting king. The living and true God: the true, because the living. This just and exalted sentiment we have in another place: 'the blessed and only potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, who only hath immortality.' It is this that makes him the only potentate, as well as the blessed; his exclusive claim to immortality. Without immortality all is
mock

mock majesty. We give the titles of high, and mighty, and powerful, to the princes of the earth; and with parade and solemnity proclaim them over their dust: a severer satire there cannot be; but to God belongs original, underived, incorruptible life: 'he has life in himself;' and is the spring of it to others; and therefore very suitably addressed by a good man in this form, 'God of my life!' The immortality of God makes him the worthy object of 'worship.' Paul demanded worship to him from the heathen by this consideration: 'We preach unto you, that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God.' This attribute makes him worthy of our 'trust' also; of our trust in the extremest dangers, and our obedience in the greatest sufferings: 'therefore we both labour, and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God:' and the suitable object of our 'prayer:' there he called upon the name of the Lord, the 'everlasting God!' a worthy name to invoke indeed. How does death sink the value of human friendships!

ships ! A man smiles upon me, and promises me fair ; and the next news I hear of him is, that he is dead. ‘ His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth, in that day his thoughts perish.’ Hence the complaint of many a deserted creature : I had a friend once that would have stood by me in my present difficulties : I could ask his counsel, I could command his substance : but he is gone. God can leave us with no such complaints : fitly, therefore, is the living God contrasted with uncertain riches, and the fading enjoyments of this world : ‘ the Lord liveth, and blessed be my rock, and let the God of my salvation be exalted.’ How does death mock the exertions of human friendship ! I indulge to all the pleasing intercourses of it that distance, and absence will allow ; and I find that my friends were departed, before the professions of my esteem and love could reach them : or ‘ the intelligence of the day,’ that announces their death, shall be found to have lain on the same table on which my line of attachment, respect, and affection,

affection, was written. But God is eternal ; and therefore my friendship with him suffers no interruption, in the sweetness, or in the fruits of it. The immortality of God is a sufficient security for the accomplishment of all his promises and our hopes : while God is eternal as well as faithful, no promise can be lost. Death may intervene, and we pass away, but his promise shall stand. From this eternity of God in conjunction with his truth, we believe there shall be a resurrection of the patriarch's dust, and the martyr's ashes ; and the fulfilment of all their expectations who died in faith. Abel's righteousness ; Enoch's godliness ; Noah's pious fear ; and Abraham's steadfast faith ; are all sure of recompense ; and we shall be made perfect with them. The long interval between death and the resurrection shall pass under his eye ; and at the set time that he has appointed, he shall remember us ; and wise and holy men of all nations and ages, from the beginning of the creation to the end of it, shall be instated in the possession of eternal life together, by
that

that God to whom one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day ; his eternity swallowing up time, and all the periods by which we divide it.

It is the remark of a great and noble writer, ‘ That in a friend a man perpetuates himself ; in that such a one will guard his children, his family, and his affairs after him ⁸.’ With how much more reason may this be said of our immortal friend, whose mercy is from generation to generation upon them that fear him ; whose providence will brighten the character, and endear the memory of the just man ; and who can prosper and bless every valuable interest that we leave behind us in this world, as well as keep the immortal spirits we resign to him till the day of recompence.

God professes himself to be under the power of friendly relation and connection as men are. ‘ Thou, Israel, art my servant ; Jacob whom I have chosen ; the seed of Abraham my friend. Thou art

⁸ Lord Bacon.

my servant; I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away.' God hath not cast off his people: and that public acknowledgment of them that shall be made, suitably to professed relation, will be a most glorious illustration of the faithfulness and everlastingness of his friendship: 'beloved for the fathers sakes.'

'If I forget thee, O Jerusalem!' No, I never can forget thee. Thy wondrous history delighted my young imagination. Thine were the kings whose chronicles impressed my tender memory. Thine the heroes and achievements that first made me to admire, and revere. Thou art 'the mother of us all:' and with filial veneration I contemplate thy stupendous and awful changes. Once the perfection of beauty; the joy of the whole earth: afterwards profaned by the heathen; and still trodden under foot of the gentiles: supported by the wretched superstitions of pilgrims; by the tomb, that is thy disgrace, and entailed thy curse: and yet the object of reserved mercy: to be built again, and adorned with thine ancient
H splendours;

splendours; thy ruins watched by the jealous eye of divine love: thy walls forbid to rise by any unhallowed hands⁹: thy maker, thy glad restorer; and God to appear in his glory within thee!

How sublime is the union of faithfulness and eternity! How perfect the God in whom it dwells; and how happy all his servants! 'Who is like unto thee! The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath thee are everlasting arms!' We may live in faith, and die in faith, because he who has promised is faithful, and lives for ever to perform. There is no foundation of comfort and courage so sure, as a God that keeps truth, and lives for ever. With suitable apprehensions of these combined perfections, we may rest assured that nothing shall separate us from the love of God; and with the changes of life, may meet death: may meet it with persuasion of safety in it, dominion over

⁹ The vain attempts to rebuild Jerusalem are well known: particularly that of the Emperor Julian, as related by Ammianus Marcellinus; 'divinitus impeditus.'

it, and happiness after it. These attributes of God put a brightness upon every prospect, whether for this world or another. Nothing can be lost that they guard; nothing taken from us that they secure. Built upon divine truth, and immutability, we may, in the language of the bible, and the unconquerable spirit of religion, 'against hope, believe in hope;' nor account ourselves destroyed when most cast down. When cast down by affliction, when prostrate in the sepulchre, our dying, and our dead hopes shall revive, through him that raiseth the dead; and to the very name of despair, the servant of God should be a stranger. The truth of God performs promises; and his eternity will perpetuate the blessedness of them: nor should life or death, or any creature, damp our ardour, or destroy our vigour in the pursuit of what he has propounded to us as our sovereign happiness. Let us, confiding in an eternal and faithful God, maintain that firmness, and elevation of soul, that has been preserved under the
H 2 influence

influence of inferior principles, and of dubitable persuasions.

When Rome and Carthage disputed the empire of the world, and the city of Rome was so besieged, that its glory seemed gone; and its existence endangered; there were those who from a presumption on Roman valour, in these circumstances, purchased the ground on which Hannibal was encamped: the purchase was good, because Rome was invincible.

With a juster presumption upon the declaration of God, and under his safe direction, Jeremiah purchased a field in the land of Judea, when its capital was as closely besieged by the king of Babylon: though he knew, and had prophesied that Judea should be conquered by that monarch; and the people carried away into captivity by him. God had told him, that houses, and fields, and vineyards, should again be possessed in that land; and therefore, through slaughter, and captivity, and beyond the period of
his

his own life, he looked forwards to the fulfilment of these words of mercy.

Let us in strength and energy of spirit, copy after such examples; and thus do honour to that eternity and faithfulness of God, by which our best interests, temporal and eternal, are made certain.

The whole world in which we live, shall be besieged; and destroyed by the armies of the living God; the works of it, and the inheritances of it, shall be burnt up. But when the world passeth away with the works, and the lusts of it; he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever: survives the desolation, and finds an incorruptible inheritance. There is no virtuous resolution, and establishment of mind, too great for these considerations to inspire.

CHAP. VI.

ADVANTAGES RESULTING FROM THIS REPRESENTATION OF A RELIGIOUS CHARACTER, THAT IT IS MAINTAINING FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD. RELIGION IS EXHIBITED IN THE MOST PLEASING ASPECT: AN INCOMPARABLE LUSTRE AND BEAUTY ARE CAST UPON PROVIDENCE: AFFLICTION IS MADE LIGHT AND EASY: THE NOTION OF DEATH IS IMPROVED.

- I. **R**ELIGION is exhibited in the most pleasing form it can possibly wear.

Religion is friendship with God.

God has shewn himself friendly to man in the spirit and frame of it: and we cannot have more pleasure in ourselves, nor better shew friendship to him, than by cultivating

cultivating the temper, and abounding in the fruits of it.

The religion that God has prescribed us, is a religion of great inward happiness, hope, and acceptableness: and if we have not got a system of religion that is so, we have not yet got the system that God designs us. What is the moral and religious system that we would expect from a friend; and from God, our divine legislator, and ruler in that character? Certainly, a system plain and pleasant; with sufficient assistances, and merciful allowances; and that displayed an equal and impartial method of conduct towards all men; with respect both to present favour and final acceptance.

And this religion we have. A religion that is the light of the world; and so, the life of men.

A religion that is pleasant; and that they speak best of who have gone most and deepest into it. Peace and joy, in conjunction with righteousness, form the kingdom which God and Christ would set up within us; and if we understand it

aright, we shall go through the world, rejoicing in hope of the glory of God; strengthened with all might in the inner man, unto all patience, and long-suffering with joyfulness. When religion is made a system of dread and terror, it is perverted: as indeed it has always too much been. The dragons, and flying fiery serpents, of hideousness and fierceness, beyond the life, with which the entrances and vestibules of old cathedrals are uncouthly ornamented, may perhaps be taken as conveying their apprehensions of religion who put them there: as if all pertaining to it must needs be affrighting: such idols the house of Israel portrayed on the wall round about; and correspondent mental images, we suffer to be portrayed upon our uninformed, or misguided imaginations; but religion is no other than tranquillity, courage, and hope; and if we adulterate it not, it will introduce these things into our bosoms.

In the religion that God has given us, we have all the assistances that we need or can desire. It is a dispensation of heavenly influence,

influence, communication, and help. All that pagan philosophy ever discovered, or said, about the Deity dwelling in a good mind, to illuminate, strengthen, and delight it, is declared in the bible with infinitely more copiousness, energy, and sweetness. Are we weak, God will make us strong. Are we in error, or like to be so, he will lead us into all truth. Are we comfortless, he will come unto us.

As all belonging to man must be imperfect, because he himself is so, the religion that God has prescribed makes all suitable and adequate allowances. It shines with a benignant ray upon every lover and doer of the truth; as becomes the dispensation of that blessed God, who knoweth the innumerable evils that compass us about; and commands entire devotedness, but not sinless perfection.

And, in the religion that God has given us, there is no respect of persons. Are not my ways equal? This is the liberal appeal of him before whom heaven and earth are one great family: beheld by him with even eye and attention. None of his

creatures are shut out from hope: none bound in despair: none discouraged from virtuous exertions: none precluded in suitable recompences: all accepted upon the same worthy and excellent ground. 'He that doth righteousness is righteous, as God is righteous.' We believe God to be righteous, because he does righteousness: and doing that, we shall be righteous in his sight.

Is not this the religion of the friend, and worthy of the friend of mankind? And must not our attention to it, as the proof of our friendship for him, be most pleasant and satisfactory to us?

Ye who fancy a harshness, and a bondage to belong to religious exercises, attend to this view of them: they are so many ways by which a good person expresses his friendship for the best of beings, and draws down his friendship upon himself in return. Consider religion in this light, and it is well worth while to leave business and company to mind it. A good man leaves business, company, and friends, not to perform a task, or to go into a disconsolate

solate solitude, but to engage in the best of all business; and to enjoy the best of all friends. To delight himself in the contemplation of infinite perfection; to put himself under the guidance of almighty providence; to divest his anxious heart of every care, by casting his care upon God; to relieve himself under every oppressing evil, by the exercises of resignation and patience: to make all prospects bright, by the elevations of faith and hope: and to establish his own comfort, by looking to God as his portion, and to heaven as his home. This is the true light in which to conceive of secret religion; and of the friend of God as employed in it: and is this gloomy? No wonder that such a man relishes retirement, and welcomes the seasons of it: to him it is no act of self-denial, no kind of unwilling constraint, no interruption of beloved pleasures, to retire and converse with his Maker: he is never less alone than when most alone: a stranger intermeddleth not with his joys; which are not the less real, or great, for another's unacquaintance with them;

and in his communion with the Father of spirits, he enjoys more in an hour, than the sons of dissipation, and professed pleasure, enjoy in a life time.

Only put God in the room of man; only transfer to that worthier object, the admiration, and esteem, the love, hope, and confidence that give us such pleasure when rightly placed in, and upon, a fellow creature, and then you have religion; that most amiable, and delighting, as well as excellent thing. A religious disposition is the highest gratification; the habits of it, a constant source of elevation and triumph; its companion, self-approbation and satisfaction. There is nothing in it to generate fear or despair; to give us one uneasy moment; or to make us look forward to another world with unquiet expectation.

And then as to public duties: Consider them in the light of friendship with Deity, and as the means both of expressing and improving that friendship, and what an appearance have they! instead of saying with the hypocritical Jews, when
will

will the new moon be gone, and the sabbath be ended; what a weariness is it? We shall say, a day in thy courts is better than a thousand.

And as the pleasure of religion is manifest from this representation of it, friendship with God, so also its grandeur: the doing justly, and loving mercy, is called walking with God, than which no higher honour can be put upon man.

II. This representation of religion, that it is friendship with God, reflects an incomparable lustre and beauty upon Providence.

How delightful a thought is it, and it is a thought that may at any time, at all times, spring up in a good man's mind; all that pertains to me, to my present, or my final state, all is in the hands of a friend, of a powerful, a faithful, an ever-present friend: I can be no where but he will be with me: can see no changes but what he must appoint: can sustain no evils but what he can over-rule to my benefit: if I suffer, my sufferings will not be penal; they will be but a part of his friendly discipline;

cipline; the fruit of love, and not of wrath.

I have that God for my friend, who is greater than man: who knows all that is distant; and sees all that is future: and whose operations have always been in favour of the righteous.

God is greater than man. He can controul his actions; and stay him in the execution of his purposes. He has an invisible empire over the spirits of men: his eye injects fiery beams into the bosom that is guarded with the most studied concealments; and thereby prevents much evil that would otherwise come upon the world: restraining the wrath of man, or diverting the mischiefs of it into a different channel from what he designed. Jeremiah makes an affecting asseveration, 'the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked;' and then asks, 'who can know it?' Who can explore that labyrinth: who can comprehend that subtil, evasive thing, that deceives its owner? 'Who can know it?' One appears that answers the challenge in all the
loftiness

loftiness of Deity: 'I, the Lord, search the heart; I try the reins!' 'He that declareth unto man what is his thought, the Lord, the God of Hosts, is his name!' What a perfection is this: to meet a man's thoughts as they rise, and declare them unto him! The matter is carried still further: 'Thou knowest my thoughts afar off!' Not only dost thou declare them when I would conceal them, but thou knowest them before they arise in my bosom! By this access to the human heart, God can prevent the evils that are meditated in it, to the security of his servants.

God knows all that is distant. How much do we want an eye that can go further than our own; and a superior attention to objects which our care cannot reach. We have an interest in the west; a friend in the east; in one quarter war spreads her desolations and dangers; in another, burning or freezing skies shed their baleful and wasting influence: by day the drought consumes; and the frost by night. We have all the winds of heaven to ask,
which

which of our interests are secure, and which are lost or endangered. We are afraid of every swelling sea; of every mighty wind; of the changing policy of every distant state. We both long, and fear, to descry the returning vessel to whose destination we committed our substance, or our friend; and the news of a far country is waited for with impatience and dread.

What a wonderful, and compassionate creature is man! His agency is feeble and contracted; his life short and uncertain; when the morning shines, he knows not that he shall see the end of the day; and one clod of the valley will soon be found sufficient to cover him: and yet in this precarious period of his existence, neither space, nor time, can give a termination to his inquietudes! Where shall we find a mantle to spread over his cares, perturbations, and fears? No covering but the wide-spreading tent of heaven can do this: no girdle, but that which the earth is girded withal, can take them within its vast circumference!

God's

God's mercy spreads the shadow of its wings over remotest regions, and remotest interests. 'He walks to and fro throughout the earth; and for this very purpose; to shew himself strong in behalf of them that fear him.'

Futurity, and the events and issues of it, especially occupy and disquiet us. It is suitable to the natural curiosity, and the natural greatness, of the human mind, that, not satisfied, or bounded, by the objects and occurrences of the present day, we carry our thoughts out into future time; and form our conjectures of what we may possibly be, do, or endure, at a distant hereafter. How do we covet that knowledge, which, of all other, would most increase our sorrow.

I take up the calendar of an opening year, and survey it with pensive look; not knowing what the term it is made for may bring forth. Months, weeks, and days, are arranged, and analyzed before me. What of my weal or woe do they contain? I wish at once to lift up the cover that every hour is to have its share
in

in raising ; and to put by the curtain that every minute is to be gradually withdrawing. I wish to loose the seals, and open, and read, this annual book of life : or that with prophetic talent, and warning voice, it could tell me what of my destiny it carries. I would have the days to speak, and the apportioned, and meted year, to teach me wisdom. Tell me, I say, what is involved in your bosom ; what bring you upon your wings ! Which is the day that is to be marked with some special favour of God ; and which with the frowns and discourtesies of men ! Which is to shine in fulfilled hope ; and which to be clouded with disappointment and sorrow ! In which am I to feel the concealed stroke of a friend ; or meet the undisguised violence of a foe ! I would provide myself with suitable measures of self-command, and forgiveness. Above all, if that day be amongst you, as possibly it may be, if that day be amongst you, tell me, which is the day of my death ! The day which I shall not see in your renewed table of times and seasons ; but which will be marked
for

for me in the mind and memory of some faithful and affectionate survivor! Tell me, which of you all, is that day? I would provide for it, in the spirit of resignation, love, and devotion!

That futurity, which is so dark a region to us, is open to him with whom we have to do: and who will do all things best for us. 'He knoweth what is in darkness; and the light dwelleth with him.'

Great and venerable does the providence of God appear in the just 'descriptions' of the bible: seeing all that is secret: descrying, and managing, all that is distant: always acting in a glorious superiority to men; overruling their purposes; and precluding, or controuling their operations: but in the 'exemplification' of these its transcendent properties, it appears more grand and venerable still. God has ever been active in the world, in his high and majestic methods of investigating what is secret, and governing in what is distant; to the display of his constant energy, eternal justice, and absolute power over the minds, and measures of mankind.

mankind. How awfully impressive are the ways in which God has delivered the righteous out of troubles ; and punished the wicked, without reserving them to the day of judgment ! His eyes have been in every place where the discrimination of them has been wanted. In the uttermost parts of the earth, and of the sea, has he shewn his presence, and set up his tribunal. Some guilty secret was to be disclosed, that had been carried to, or lay in, the recess of a foreign land : some distant mystery of iniquity was to be revealed : some that were dead, were to live again ; and the lost to be found : some banished child, or injured orphan, must come to the inheritance of his father ; and possess ' the treasures of darkness : ' God's eye had marked him for this, at the ends of the earth ; and his hand brought him over the great and wide sea ; to shew that a lying tongue is but for a moment : that the spoil shall be plucked from the teeth of the oppressor : to shew that the Lord knoweth the thoughts of men : and that their thoughts and deeds shall all be vain, when
opposed

opposed to his righteous will, and uncontrollable authority. We have known, or heard, affecting and memorable instances of these things.

Now, the Lord of this providence is the friend of the righteous man: with what joy should his faith in it be accompanied: with what pleasure should he behold its processes: with what satisfaction commit himself to its care: with what resignation submit to its disposals: with what reverent observance wait, and watch, and follow its orders: with what perfect acquiescence, leave all secret things in its bosom, and future things to its direction? How can the changes of his life, or the time, place, or circumstances of his death, be under a higher or better direction? What is not, and cannot, be known to him, is, to his greater advantage, known to God: the remote objects of his sollicitude, or affection, are under the care of the universal Ruler: men under his restraint, and controul: and life, and death, in his hand; who loves the righteous, and preserves all them that love him! Had we
a mortal

a mortal friend, whose prospection was uncommonly great, whose sphere of influence was wider than most others moved in; and who had an extraordinary command of men, and measures; and who would avail himself of all for us; should we not bless ourselves in the connection; have our brow smoothed, and feel our hearts light and easy: should we not find ourselves confirmed and heightened in all our natural firmness and fortitude? Be it so in the recollection of God's friendly care and providence. That providence, that is with others, faith, should to a religious man be delight.

When our blessed Saviour attempted to fortify the minds of his timorous disciples, he did it by this consideration, that he was their fast and assured friend. I say unto you, my friends, be not afraid of them that kill the body; let my friendship preclude your fear. I will take care of my friends; so that either your enemies shall not kill you, or if they kill you, they shall not hurt you. Now, forasmuch as God calls us friends, let his declared friendship have a like

like effect upon us; pacifying our spirits, dissipating our fears, and enabling us to look forward into futurity and eternity with all the confidence of faith and hope. Is God my friend, may a good man say, then he will order all for the best, both while I live, and when I die; the time of my death will be the direction of his wisdom: and after my death, he can take care of all that I care for in this world; so that every interest is secure, and every fear groundless. This makes the divine government appear lovely, and our concern with the world sit easy upon our spirits.

III. Is a religious man, as such, a friend of God, how prepared should he be for afflictions, in virtue of such a character and relation.

He may in all conditions adopt Paul's concise and descriptive account of himself and his brethren: troubled on every side, yet not distressed: perplexed, but not in despair: cast down, but not destroyed: as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing: as having nothing, and yet possessing all things. A friend of God can never be in a state that
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is to be pronounced desperate. Life itself is not essential to his comfort: he may be happy though he dies; and he must die before he can be happy completely. Death, though ruin to a wicked man, is quite consistent with the happiness of a good man. With him, there is an entire connection of death and blessedness. 'Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord!' Do you doubt this? You have the attestation of the divine spirit: the spirit of truth and goodness: and his direction to record it, for your comfort. 'Write this!' Write it, as matter of certainty, however matter of joyful surprize. How much less can trouble hurt him. In all afflictive changes the friend of God has him near, who is denominated the God of hope; the God who comforteth them that are cast down: the goods of such a man may be spoiled, but his soul abides in peace'. In the exercises of divine
friendship,

¹ Fenelon, whose fine profession of resignation I have related, (see p. 113) manifested an equal act of it. Fallen under the displeasure of the king, he dissipated
his

friendship, such as resignation, faith, and hope; he has one heaven in possession, as well as another in reserve: in the keen sensations, and excruciating feelings of the children of this world, whose portion is in this life, he has no part or share: his treasure is in heaven: and can therefore no more be affected by the convulsions of the earth, than the sun can be injured by a storm, or the firmament be removed by an earthquake: the tranquillity, and establishment of his mind are as little injured, as his interests are destroyed: and as where

his uneasiness by the innocent pleasures of an easy and enlivened conversation. The Abbe de Langeron entered the room with a dejected air: 'Have you received a letter from Flanders?' said he; 'Yes,' replied the Archbishop: 'Have they informed you of what has happened?' 'Yes, they have.' 'But have they told you that all your furniture, your books, and papers are burned?' 'Yes: I know all this, and I am already comforted.' He resumed, with great calmness, the agreeable conversation which Langeron had interrupted. When, a few minutes afterwards a letter was delivered from the king to him, he opened it without any precipitation; found he was ruined, and did not discover the least emotion, or change of colour; just mentioned it to his friends, and then continued his discourse.

the treasure is, the heart will be also ; the friend of God has, in his heavenly dispositions and affections, a fund of sublime and permanent entertainment : he has that spiritual mind which is life and peace, and which effectually preserves both the tranquillity and grandeur of the soul of man. The spirit of religion is the spirit of grandeur ; the spirit of God, and of glory, resting upon us. What defiance of the power of man does it inspire ? What is banishment to the ends of the earth, to him whose ‘ name is written in heaven ?’ ‘ Send me where you will,’ said one, under an inferior influence than that of religion ; ‘ you can send me no where, but my name and honour will have arrived before me².’ So does the persecutor send to before-arrived honour !

Secure and happy in the friendship of

² Said by Frederic Hoffman, Physician to the father of the late king of Prussia ; who thinking that nature itself was to yield to his exactions, became angry with Hoffman because he did not succeed in removing his malady ; and threatened him with banishment for the failure.

heaven,

heaven, Paul bids defiance to the power of the earth, in a strain of rhetoric which nothing but the divine spirit could ever have dictated. One who possessed as much natural greatness of soul as an Apostle³, and that, carried to the highest pitch by the noble considerations and the most excellent influence of christianity, glosses upon the incomparable passage I refer to somewhat in this manner. Having magnanimously challenged every possible trouble to separate him from God, and by so doing complete his infelicity, such as tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, and the sword: and finding none of these to answer to the challenge; but that, both singly, and in this combination into which he had thrown them, all were silent; he goes on in the elevations of his faith to suppose even impossible trials; such as the attempts of angels, principalities, and powers, against him: he may indeed be

³ The pious and truly venerable archbishop Leighton.

supposed to speak of evil angels and powers: but should he be conceived as speaking of good ones, 'the very angels of heaven, were they to attempt it, could not separate us from the divine friendship, or make us wretched while we enjoyed it:' there would be nothing in this, but what might be accounted for by the uncommon sublimity of Paul's spirit in the present case, affecting to encounter difficulties that will never happen: 'Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors!' 'These things!' It is spoken with an air of conscious superiority: and is only saying in other words, 'These things are no match for christian principles: no equal combatants for a disciple of the Son of God:' and they have often turned the battle in his favour; by means of combinations, and circumstances, undesigned, and unthought of. What has been designed, against a good man, has often appeared to have been for him: his enemies so overruled, as to have become charitable to him: and made to weave the very honours in which God had ordained that
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he should shine. How unaffailable by trouble, how invulnerable by it, are righteous men said to be ! ' In six troubles, and in seven, and yet no evil touching them ! ' ' In floods of great waters, which do not come nigh them : ' not deluged, however surrounded ! According to the representations of scripture, trouble may long surround a good man without invading his heart : though throwing down the outworks, never gaining the citadel. ' I glory in tribulation, through the power of Christ that resteth on me. ' To this sublime and eloquent Apostle we are indebted for the happy distinction of the ' outward ' man, and the ' inward : ' the one in peace, while the other is grievously assaulted, and acquiring strength by the very strokes that weaken it. Paul endured as feeling this fine distinction that himself had made ; and the like superiority to trouble in the first christians awed and amazed. Their enemies attributed their courage and constancy to the assistance of the devil, as the Jews had done Christ's miracles. They knew that the common

spirit of a man was not equal to a patience and self-possession in torment and torture like theirs; and therefore looked for some foreign adequate cause; and thus, though undesignedly, and even blasphemously, they magnified the religion they were endeavouring to extirpate.

The Roman Poet speaks of a composed, and established mind, which makes its possessor care not what seas tumultuate, or what stars rise or set⁴:

Another, of literary taste, and philosophic mind, said, that, did he not see others agitated, he should hardly know that he was in an unquiet world⁵.

How much more should he make such professions, and feel himself in so undisturbed a state, who is in friendship with that almighty being, who 'commands the sea; and names the stars; calls forth their

⁴ Desiderantem quod fatis est, neque
Tumultuosum sollicitat mare,
Nec sævus Arcturi Cadentis
Impetus, aut orientis Hædi.

HOR. iii. ODE I.

⁵ Petrarch.

hosts by number ; and gives the peace that passeth all understanding.'

God, in the promises of support, and security to his servants, supposes the very worst that can befall them: 'their passing through waters; through rivers; and through fire:' the strength of our reliance upon him, should be in proportion to these pre-allowed extremities: and to his corresponding declarations: 'I will be with thee: they shall not overflow thee: thou shalt not be burned: the flame shall not kindle upon thee!' How kind and condescending his repeated calls to steadfastness, and fortitude; 'hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness; hearken unto me, the people in whose heart is my law: 'fear ye not!' Our response should be, 'though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou shalt revive me.' The revivals of divine presence, power, and goodness, we may hope, because God has promised them; and others experience them: seeming, in the vale of tears, to have a concealed fountain of refreshment, strength, and comfort within them: 'who passing

through the valley of Baca, make it a well: the rain also filleth the pools: they go from strength to strength.' Trouble, at the first onset, especially if new and unaccustomed, may cause perturbation, and shake our resolution: but our good principles having time to operate, and our old resources in divine wisdom, and love resorted to, we shall regain our stability and settledness. God is faithful, who will not let his servants be 'tried above what they are able to bear:' he will come to them on the threatening wave, as Jesus walked on the swelling sea to the fearful disciples; and feeling his presence, they will no longer be afraid. Only 'acquaint thyself with him now;' and in the time of trouble, God will manifest the acquaintance; and bring all the good there is in it unto thee⁶. Make the acquaintance in thy prosperity, under the influence of love and gratitude; and then, thou mayest most confidently hope, and most consist-

⁶ Read Atterbury's most interesting Sermon on this subject, 'Acquaintance with God, the best support under afflictions.' Vol. II. Ser. VI.

ently

ently ask, the consolation and benefit of it, in the day of adversity.

IV. Is the spirit, and the practice of religion, friendship with God, then the notion of death is greatly improved; and the prospect of it made familiar and pleasant.

We want something to reconcile us to death; that awful part of God's dispensation towards us. 'All the ideas connected with it, says the great Christian Philosopher, are of the disgustful and alarming kind. The quarters from which they are collected are unpleasing and terrifying to us. Death is the aggregate of imperfection, weakness, loathsomeness, corruption, and disorder: it is the article where age, infirmity, disease, and dissolution prevail, in opposition to the order, beauty, and lustre of youth, health, and life. The former have some degree of shame and humiliation attending them, as in many instances, the consequences and punishments of sin: whereas, the latter are honourable, as being the sources of power and happiness; and the rewards of right-

eousness?' What shall reconcile us to death, his mien and figure; attendants, and concomitant circumstances? What shall do it more than this consideration!

It is going to a friend; a powerful and all-sufficient friend; in whom we shall find all that will make up our happiness; completely and eternally.

Death dissolves human friendships, and that is its sharpest sting: but so far from breaking this highest and happiest connection, it makes it the stricter, perfect, and entire, and also perpetual.

It is no enemy that calls a good man out of the world, nor one that he has been a stranger to in it: love and devotion on his part, and condescending goodness on the part of God, established a pleasing intercourse upon earth, that will be continued in heaven.

How easy a death, says Mr. Howe, should that man die, who in expectation of expiring his last breath, can reflect and say that his life hath been a continual

⁷ Hartley on Man. Vol. I. 466.

walk with God! Death conveys him to no unknown presence; to die is, with him, but to know that being better, whom he knew before; and to love him better, whom he loved before; and to have those enjoyments improved, in degree, with the nature, and kind, of which he had a former acquaintance⁸.

Friendship with God in life, will be followed by such a death. 'I am going to meet God; but I have made him, and his perfections familiar and pleasant to my mind: I find nothing in myself that is averse to him; and have no dread of any thing unfriendly in or from him: I love him; and he loveth the righteous: and as death cannot destroy my union with the fountain of life, it need not destroy the delight of it: I can perfectly reconcile myself to his presence, whom having not seen, I have loved.' So may the friend of God, conceive and speak of death; with such a placidness and willingness meet it. 'The divine nature,' that he has within

⁸ Posthumous, Ser. I. 210.

him: The 'meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light,' which he discerns upon him, give him an assurance of heart before God. The greatness of his approaching change, is allowed to affect him with a thoughtful solemnity as it advances: 'the heart will in some degree fail when the flesh does:' but the past friendship recollected, in the choice, and preference, the devotional intercourse, delight, confidence, and experienced benefit of it: 'Whom have I in heaven, or desired on the earth, but thee:' 'I have been continually with thee; and found it good to draw unto thee:' 'I have put my trust in the Lord God;' and 'thou hast holden me by my right-hand:' the past friendship in these things, remembered; and 'the portion for ever,' believed in, and beheld with an appropriating eye; will allay perturbation, and remove all inquietude but what is natural and reasonable: and leave him the comfort of that 'hope which the righteous hath in his death:' and he is sure of the promised reward beyond it.

The shadow of death is cold and dim-
maying:

may: and we may 'fear exceedingly as we enter into the cloud:' (the commencing battle is said to shake valour more than the heat of conflict:) but that cloud, pierced, and passed, we shall find that it had intercepted the sight of our master's glory; and divided us from the most illustrious congress: shall say, 'it is good for us to be here!' and instead of needing to build tabernacles for the sake of long enjoying the bright objects around us, shall find that we have a house, eternal, in the heavens, prepared ready for us.

With a conscious integrity in my bosom, should I dread the meeting any man that I had been concerned with, or for; of whatsoever superior rank or circumstance? With like conscious integrity, may a good man see God. If he can make Hezekiah's appeal, in those days that he was sick unto death, 'Remember now, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and done that which is good in thy sight;' God will admit the appeal: and will remember, and receive, that man.

The

The goodness of God to us, as well as our conscious uprightness, and duty to him, should make the prospect of death unterrifying and easy to us.

How pleasant is the proposed, or promised interview with a long unseen benefactor: we count the hours till we have it. If from acknowledged relation, or high sentiments of generosity and kindness, I had for years experienced the protection and bounty of one that I had never seen; received food and raiment at his cost and care; and been put into a course of learned and virtuous discipline, that qualified me for sustaining and enjoying all that belongs to an important and happy character; should I receive with reluctance the call he should give me to his habitation; engaging to meet me on the road, conduct me to his house, and (purporting now to keep me always near him) to make me welcome, and happy, there? God is that friend, who leads and feeds us all our life long, and by the discipline of religion trains us up for himself, and his call of his servants to himself, should be heard
by

by them with a similar readiness to obey. Understanding their interest and happiness in him, they might in the promptness of their acquiescence, and the firmness of their dependence, even anticipate his call.

‘ Bid me come unto thee on the water !’

All go in the path of death, but none return. How do we wish the communications of one that has trod it : how should we listen to his reports, and urge, and multiply our enquiries ! Tell us, from your own knowledge, what it is to die : what are the shades of death ; and how found you the path of life : what ministering spirit held your feet upon the dark mountains : what benevolent angel strengthened you for enduring the opening splendours of the invisible world ; and led your admiring soul to the throne of God : what sights and sounds met your delighted eyes, and ravished ears : and what the joy that the righteous enter into : speak, for you know the love of God, and the honour of his servants !

The friendship of God is our security in all this darkness : it does not remove the veil,

veil, but it keeps us safe and happy under it. One general conclusion we must come to: all must be agreeable to the munificence of God; and come up to his promises; which are great and rich enough.

He that is in the habits of friendship with Deity, can never die at a wrong time. Death is his friend, in all circumstances and seasons, because God is so, who makes him his messenger: and he can come in no hour for harm. A good man need never be so attached to other friends, as not to be ready to go to his divine friend on high; never can be so busy, either with them or for them, as not to have an advantage in leaving them for him: to depart and to be with God, must be better than to remain with human friends in any imaginable circumstances of happiness or usefulness. ‘Death is gain:’ most certainly nothing can be lost, by finding ourselves in the arms of God’s tender mercies: no pleasure lost by entering into our master’s joy; our father’s house: the many mansions: the prepared places.

Devotional sentiments and habits, which
constitute

constitute friendship with deity, are an habitual fitness for death; and so every time, place, and way in which he can come to us, is kept from being unseasonable, and exceptionable. 'If he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, still blessed are those servants.'

All are sensible of the necessity of preparation for death; but the generality of the world mistake the nature of it. Their preparation is hasty and mechanical: yet, however short of the end, they rest in it; and are encouraged to do so by those who should know better; and deal plainer. At the approach of death, a form, or a ceremony is resorted to, and placed in the room of living by the faith of the Son of God: and an absolution or a sacrament is made to atone for the want of practical godliness. Men of genuine goodness, cannot but disdain these poor appurtenances of religion, considered as a ground of safety, and a condition of hope; nor refrain from pitying those, who, where everlasting interests are concerned, have
no

no better security for happiness. The spirit and temper of religion, are that substance of which these appendages are but the shadow ; and when a future state is apprehended to be near, administer a satisfaction that is full and entire. He that is in friendship with heaven, is always fit for heaven ; and for death, as the way to it ; and the excellent things that constitute such friendship, compose an ‘ habitual ’ preparation, which supercedes any ‘ temporary or occasional one : ’ should death come into the house to him, or meet him by the way ; find him in an act of devotion, or at his daily labour ; all will be one in point of safety and benefit to him. The way to God lies straight and open to him, from a solitary mountain, or an unfrequented wood : and without priest, or mass, without absolution or sacrament, he may readily follow wherever death points the way : having this for his rejoicing, as well as his courage, even the testimony of his conscience, ‘ that in simplicity, and godly sincerity, he has had his conversation in this world : ’

‘ the

‘the door opened in heaven,’ makes him cheerfully meet the opening earth: and the voice, though not as of a trumpet, that talketh with him, and says, ‘come up hither,’ reconciles him to the previous commanded, going down!

The dying in friendship with God, is dying safely. They who die in a different state, are ‘slain of death:’ it makes an utter end of them, so far as relates to happiness and hope.

It is also dying ‘comfortably.’ This friendship softens the bed of death; sustains in its agonies; and gilds the hovering shadows of the grave. ‘Thou art with me.’

‘This is the true friendship in death!’

‘Let us also go that we may die with him!’ A departing friend needs no such

9 The ingenious, and devotional Mrs. Rowe, wrote a book under this name; with the additional title, of ‘Letters from the Dead to the Living:’ designed to impress the doctrine of a future state; and to give us, in an animated, and interesting way, a probable knowledge of its objects, and enjoyments.

union

union in death with us : nor can be benefited by it. There is a higher union by which he is benefited : the union with that God who lives when he dies ; and at that moment preserves the union in all the vitality, energy, and blessedness of it.

‘ Go up into that mountain and die !’ said God to Moses : and his servant did it : a most desirable, and to a good man a reasonable submission.

‘ Fear not, Jacob, to go down into Egypt ; for I will go with thee, and will surely bring thee up again.’ We may as confidentially go down to the house appointed for all living ; for we are under cover of a like promise ; and have equal certainty of being brought up again. God, in his own time, will send us deliverance from death, by the same hand that has already brought us deliverance from sin. When that solemn and interesting period which he has appointed shall be come, and all persons and things in the upper and lower worlds shall be ready,
he

he will give commandment concerning us: the dead shall arise: and his own friends first.

A certain emperor 'having on a great occasion, opened his prisons, and released his captives, is said to have expressed himself in the following humane, though inefficacious wish: 'and now, would to God I could open the tombs, and give life to the dead!' This our divine and heavenly friend, both can do, and will do. 'Our friend Lazarus sleepeth: but I go to awake him out of his sleep:' so will God awake his friends from death: raise them by his power, and adorn them with his glory.

Let us account of death no otherwise than in connection with so sure and advantageous a recovery from it: and then we shall venture into the world of eternity at the divine command, as Peter walked on the water at the call of Christ: shall find our faith assisted as his was; and, that hand, stretched forth, that shall subdue every degree of remaining, or re-

¹ Theodosius.

turning

turning fear ; and set us on a safe, and friendly shore.

Compared with this, how mean is the ambition of dying rich ! Or in any of those circumstances of distinction, and advantage over others, which are so highly valued, and so vehemently coveted by the children of men ! A man may have all the comforts of this life, and yet die comfortless : in death as well as at the resurrection, ‘ the upright have the dominion.’

‘ God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave, for he shall receive me.’ Reception is approbation. This plaudit of our kind and bounteous master, is the ‘ honour and glory,’ to which they that do good, shall arise : and shall answer, and exceed every apprehension of it, that had gladdened their hearts, and strengthened their hands in their course of duty and trial. Those of his servants that have had the worthiest, and most generous thoughts of their Lord, shall find his acceptance fuller, and more endearing, and dignifying to them, than they had imagined

gined or presumed, in any glorious victory gained by their faith, and love of him, over the powers and interests of this world: the 'tried patience, more precious than gold,' will be found to more praise than they expected; and cause a surprise of admiration and gratitude unto them: and those good persons who have had lower, and less liberal thoughts of the God they served, and therefore served him with less joy and hope to themselves, will find the veil removed from their eyes; and the damp taken from their hearts: they will have their surprises also: 'What is this the liberal rewarder, the kind father, the bounteous master, the divine friend, we were taught to suspect, to flee, and shelter ourselves from: of whom we thought hardly; and before whom we walked mournfully!' The entrance into the heavenly kingdom, shall be 'ministered abundantly:' with overflowing benignity, and high complacency, on God's part: and 'the exceeding great joy,' of our presentation before the presence of
his

his glory, is said to be his, as well as ours.

In a state of friendship with God, and that religion in our hearts that constitutes it, we may meet him at judgment, as well as at death. He has done much to soften the solemnity of that scene; and to abate the terror of its grandeur, to them that love, and serve him. His, will be the 'judgment' of a friend and father; as the 'religion' that he has prescribed, bears the characters of both². Read the twenty-fifth of Matthew; and say if you could contrive, or desire, eternal judgment to proceed upon any principles, or by any laws, more encouraging and satisfactory, than are analogous to the representations which that chapter makes. The judge one of ourselves: and that calls us brethren: that loves us, as well as is one of us: that makes virtues, that are as easy, and familiar to us, as they are noble and excellent, the ground of his acceptance and reward: appreciating the merit

² See page 150—6.

of every character of which the great family of mankind is composed, by its attention to the peace, and order, and comfort of the whole: stamping the value of services at a higher rate than the performer would do: as well as asserting their reality when he is ready to doubt it, though against so high an authority. 'The righteous shall say, when saw we thee hungry, or thirsty, or sick, or a stranger, or a prisoner, and ministered unto thee?' Then, 'the king' shall answer; and wonderfully explain, and confirm! I know that these are figurative representations, but they are designed to set forth correspondent, analogous, realities; and to convey indubitable truths under their pleasing and attractive forms.

The books shall be opened! What books? No books of hidden decrees that we have never read: but that book that lies in all our houses; that we have been acquainted with from our childhood; that we have never had one hard thought of, or framed one objection to: the book that we have loved; and by which we

have been daily refreshed and comforted. 'God shall judge the secrets of all hearts, by my gospel.'

The picturesque of judgment, is awfully majestic: made up of every thing that can command our solemn attention. Every thing that is revealed, concerning judgment, is grand and interesting. 'It has been the effort of divine wisdom to render it in the highest degree affecting to us; and by all such representations as it has seen fit to make of it, to give it an influence sovereignly efficacious on the heart. Nor is the contrivance of heaven, in that single circumstance that is unknown, relative to this grand and astonishing scene, less admirable than in those that have been revealed: I mean the absolute uncertainty of the time when it is to commence³!' This is a secret in the bosom of the father: unknown to men, and to the angels of heaven; and also to the judge himself: presenting its splendours suddenly to an

³ Late C. Bulkley's Gospel Economy.

unprepared world; that had suffered all the methods of divine providence, that were designed to prepare for the introduction of it, to pass unheeded. 'Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him; and they also that pierced him; and all the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him!'

But that gospel that asserts a future judgment, and makes us to see it as actually set, in an assemblage of the most awakening ideas and circumstances, does also teach us how to meet it; and make the prospect pleasing, as well as the issues of it safe. 'The impression that the representations of it, are intended to make upon our minds, should be felt by us; and preserved in all the vividness and energy of it; but it appears that a good mind, should not be overwhelmed by those representations, nor be held in a state of bondage, or terror. 'How shall we escape, if not by the salvation that the gospel brings?' If a conversation in heaven, maintained by a devotional temper; and a connection with heaven, and

with the God of it, preserved by holy and practicable duties and attentions ; if a system of the plainest rules ; a revered and loved authority ; the most reasonable requirements ; and the most condescending and gracious judge, can make the belief and prospect of judgment easy and pleasant to our minds, all these things we have ; and under the due, encouraging influence of them, the glorious appearing of the Son of God from heaven, is characterized, ‘ that blessed hope !’

Wherefore, let us comfort the feeble-minded ; assure our own hearts before God ; and while diligent in duty, patient in suffering, ministering to necessities, and given to acts and habits of piety and hospitality, let us go on our way with cheerfulness, and joyful expectation ; though looking for so tremendous and unparalleled a scene, as the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints !

CHAP. VII.

SOME GENERAL REFLECTIONS ON THE
SUBJECT—WE SEE WHERE TO PLACE
THE REAL DIGNITY OF HUMAN NA-
TURE—WE LEARN THAT LIVING IN
THE BODY IS ENTIRELY CONSISTENT
WITH A VERY NOBLE AND EXALTED
KIND OF LIFE—AND, WE SHOULD
ASPIRE AFTER THAT LIFE, IT BEING
NO MORE THAN THE EXCELLENCE
AND HAPPINESS OF OUR FIRST ES-
TATE.

I. **W**E see where to place the real
dignity of human nature. A
capacity for this friendship, and most of
all, the cultivation of it, raises us above
the brutes, and puts us upon a level with
angels. Do angels converse with God, so
may we; are they blessed in his friendship
and favour, we may be the same. Upon
this let us value ourselves: and the more

we do value ourselves upon this honour, the less shall we be in danger of over-valuing ourselves upon other, and inferior considerations. Men usually rate themselves high enough, but they do it for things that are very remote from true greatness, and which can never constitute it.

Some value themselves upon form and figure, and other graceful ornaments of the body: these to be sure attract the eyes and engage the inclinations of men: the world admires them, and gallantry adores them: but they that have the greatest share of them, are daily subject to altering diseases, and to ghastly death. Such as are worshipped for these advantages to-day, may not be known by them to-morrow. They shall not say this was Jezebel, or this was a king's daughter!

Others value themselves upon their wealth; we have so much property in this world which we inhabit: let such know that the world acknowledges no proprietor but the Lord that made it: it changes its owners daily; serves one man,

or

or one generation of men, as contentedly as it has served another: and is perpetually receiving into its bowels proud creatures, who fancied themselves to have dominion over it. The Most High is the possessor of heaven and earth, as well as the creator.

Others value themselves upon honour: upon an airy title: upon gaudy ensigns; which have no meaning but what a weak and fantastic conceit gives them: upon a star or a ribband: a man lifts up his head on account of these things, and cries, 'I am such or such a dignified person amongst my fellow mortals!'

Many value themselves upon their descent and ancestry: we are of such a line: noble or royal blood runs in our veins: and we are the honourable of the earth: as if any merit belonged to them for what they could neither order nor hinder.

And what multitudes value themselves upon the pomp and parade of life! because they are arrayed sumptuously, and feed delicately: because their outside is finely trimmed and adorned; and others

are commanded by them, and bow before them.

These are the things that poor mortals usually look big upon; and estimate themselves and one another by: and accordingly, were they asked what they would choose to give themselves weight and consequence, they would answer; we would have certain shares of comeliness, beauty, and proportion, to be objects of admiration to others: we would be richly attired, that we may admire ourselves: we would have the wealth of our neighbours, that meaner persons may be held in dependence upon us, and submission unto us: we would have spacious houses: great estates: high connections and alliances, to give us eminence in the world, and to enable us to direct or controul the motions and politics of it.

But these are all alien things: they are alien and foreign to the true dignity of man. The right and fair estimation of any of us, is not to be taken from them. Of all such pre-eminences we may say with Peter, ‘ All flesh is grass, and all the
glory

glory of man as the flower of grass: the grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away.' We have that to value ourselves upon, and to be proud of, that as much transcends them as a diamond excels dust, or gold a feather. Man! God calls thee to be his friend, and assures thee that he is thine: and instructs thee in the method of improving this friendship, and carrying it on to all eternity! Here is thy greatness!

To superficial men who are caught with external shew, as if all greatness arose from that; while they overlook the dignity of the immortal soul, formed for divine contemplation and converse; to them we may say as Jesus to the Pharisees: 'Ye fools and blind! did not he that made that which is without, make that which is within also? Ye ignorant, infatuated creatures, who take so much pains about washing the outward part of you; do ye indeed, not know that ye have an inward part, the work of the same Almighty hand, infinitely more excellent in its own nature, and therefore proportionably more

worthy of your attention and care? In like manner may we ask, are men indeed ignorant of the real excellence that they possess in an immortal soul, and its proper employments and improvements, that they value themselves so much, value themselves entirely, upon what has no higher origin than the earth, nor any farther reference than to a corruptible body?

Let all considerate and serious men know their true excellence, and assert it. Let all such lift up themselves, and tell the world, that they can use its good things for their present purposes, but that they scorn them as any suitable portion: and that however delightful they may be as the accommodations of their pilgrimage, they are not to aim at their hearts. Let all that are in actual friendship with God especially, tell the world, when it makes its inadequate or its criminal offers, and says, ‘all these things will I give if ye will worship me;’ that they know where to be better supplied: that they have all that it can offer, and more than it can offer in their divine friend: and that in his com-
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pany and fellowship, there are sweeter pleasures, more excellent honours, and more substantial blessings, than the world ever gave, or knew of. This will be true greatness: the spirit and language of persons sensible of the exalted privilege of friendship with Deity, and disdaining every thing that would attempt to rival it, or break in upon it.

II. The life that we live in this frail body is entirely consistent with a very noble and exalted kind of life. This body, with all its infirmities and incumbrances, allows capacity and opportunity for intercourse with the father of spirits. Though it be comparatively a mean and inconvenient mansion, it does not hinder us from pursuing great designs, and enjoying pure and very sublime pleasures. God has made it our temporary dwelling; and we must take care that we do not make it our dormitory, or our grave: in which for our souls to forget themselves: and their amazing and angelic powers to be buried and consumed. Notwithstanding the weakness and meanness of its tabernacle

of clay, the soul of man may follow its own grand and appropriate interests: and enjoy its own proper and noble gratifications. There are the pleasures of devotion for that, as well as meats and drinks, and refreshments for the body. God has not dealt so unequally by the two constituent parts of our frame, as to provide suitably for the inferior appetites, and leave the more excellent principle surrounded only with such things as degrade it, and render it unhappy.

Come then, O man, whosoever thou art, whose generous spirit is ready to look down with a sort of conscious despicency upon thy present condition; come, and learn how to aggrandize thyself; and how to make fallen humanity still wear an honourable and a pleasing aspect. Thou art not yet sunk from all the privileges of thy creation and primitive condition: thou hast no occasion to herd with the brutes, as if thou hadst no higher destination, nor to be ingulphed in carnal pleasures, as if thou hadst no higher portion. God himself courts thy communion and friendship:
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he offers himself to thy view in every creature, and seeks to attract thee by every favour: Friendship with God subsists in the world: and this brings the felicity of angels down to the dwellings of men. How great does Abraham appear! Abraham the friend of God. How great does Enoch appear! Enoch walked with God. How great does it make the Apostles appear! I have called you friends. How greatly is Moses dignified! Moses, the man of God. And these high and interesting connections with Deity which have subsisted in the world, may always subsist. Thou mayest have thy share in all this honour and happiness. Break through thy prison walls then; look through the veil of flesh that is thy present covering; and above men that are thy present associates; claim kindred with the God of the universe, and give a greatness to thy condition in this world, by thy fellowship with another; have thy conversation in heaven—and thus ennoble and improve thy life upon earth.

III. We should aspire after a life thus
dignified

dignified and blessed with divine friendship, because this was our original excellency and felicity. I observed at the beginning of this treatise, that Friendship with God was the temper and blessedness of man in his state of innocence and paradise. Now how should we aspire after this temper, and consequent blessedness again! It is always reckoned a commendable ambition when men endeavour by fair and honest methods, to rise again to any heights of eminence from which they have fallen. Let me, then, apply this to the present case. Is it not indeed commendable, for every man to use his best endeavours for being to a certain degree what God made the first man; a compound of light and love; of knowledge, devotion and duty? Such was man in his first estate; and though now his degeneracy is great and apparent; though now we have comparatively only the maimed strokes of the lovely and perfect picture; yet surely we should be enquiring after, and listening to, the probable means of our restoration. We should daily be full of thought how

we

we may again become what we originally were. We should ask, is there no possibility of this? And if we are in good earnest in the enquiry, the infallible word of God will resolve the question to our peace and satisfaction: and will tell us that we may be the friends of God again, and may enjoy again all the blessedness of that relation. Man should be ashamed of his present degenerate state, because he was created in a purer and a nobler one. Degradation always implies dishonour and shame. And in the present instance, without our sincere and vigorous attempts for a recovery, our shame will be entailed upon us for ever. Therefore all such as will not be recovered from the common apostacy, and be reduced to their allegiance to God, and live in friendship with him in this preparatory state, are said, when they rise from the dead, to awake to shame and everlasting contempt: Shame, perpetuated under the eye and observation of holy and immortal angels; glorious creatures, who must resent mens refusal of recovering goodness hereafter; as they
rejoice

rejoice at their repentance and conversion now. It is no shame to a creature which was always mean and ignoble, that it is so at the present moment. But that man, formed after the image of God, should lose that image, and become a part of the serpent's seed; this we should think of with a generous indignation. An excellent person and a philosopher⁴, struck with the infelicity and depravity of the present state, said, 'That he in a manner blushed at the recollection of his being in the body.' This shewed a refined and an elevated spirit. A similar sentiment we should adopt: and should blush at reflecting, that whereas man was once a holy and a happy being, he became unholy and depraved, and consequently unhappy: out of Friendship with God, and uncomfortable in himself: and should be enquiring, how what has been lost may be regained; and what is defective be supplied. What an ambition do men discover for regaining the credit of their family, or of their coun-

⁴ Plotinus.

try! Let us be actuated by a still more enlarged zeal; a zeal for the credit and interest of mankind; and under the power of this liberal principle, let us aspire, and urge others to aspire, after the renewal of that Friendship with God, the loss of which is the most comprehensive misery. This we shall do, if we have any sense of human greatness: any remembrance of our divine original: 'any breathings of our ancient hope.'

CHAP. VIII.

MOTIVES TO FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD.

THE AMBITION OF IT IS NATURAL, COMMENDABLE. THIS FRIENDSHIP, CONFERS TRUE HONOUR. IT YIELDS THE HIGHEST PLEASURE. TO SEEK AND CULTIVATE IT IS THE PART OF GRATITUDE. IT IS ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY TO US.

I. **T**HE ambition of Friendship with God is a natural ambition. He is not worthy of being called a man that is not ambitious of Friendship with God. To forsake our own glorious original: lightly to esteem the God that formed us: and to be lightly esteemed of him in return: these things subject to the very deepest reproach; as being repugnant to all the dictates and wishes of pure and uncorrupted nature. What is more natural between parent and children, governor

vernor and subjects, the benefactor and such as are obliged to him, than friendship? The neglect of friendship, and especially the prevalence of disaffection, where these relations subsist, would fill the world with confusion. How solicitous are men to be approved of the fathers of their flesh? and how much more should we covet the approbation and friendship of the adorable father of our spirits! Let us then never be at rest till our spirits tend to God in sincere and strong aspirations after his favour. Let us never be satisfied with the state of our own minds till a desire of divine friendship prevail over all our other desires, and account ourselves wanting in one capital characteristic of God's creatures and children, until we prefer him above our chief joy. Let us be ashamed of calling ourselves the offspring of God, while, with the unthinking generality, we seek every thing more than a mutual complacency between ourselves and our divine parent; or while, with prophane and impious sinners, we live as if we meant to put a contempt upon the well-

well-pleasedness and love of our Maker. Let us account a concern or unconcern about the friendship of heaven, the indication of a natural or unnatural state of mind; and let us try our spirits and be satisfied or dissatisfied with them accordingly. An unnatural state of mind will always be an unhappy one; and such ours will be till the divine friendship be supremely desired by us.

II. The ambition of divine friendship is as commendable as it is natural. It will put us upon nothing but what will secure both our honour and our peace: will act in no way but what both heaven and earth will justify and approve. In seeking the friendship of men there is always pain, and oftentimes guilt: a conformity to them in their humours, their weaknesses, or their vices, is too frequently the hard condition of keeping in their good graces. But God is perfect and holy; and therefore while we aim at getting or keeping his friendship, we shall do nothing but what is good and great. He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good, and what doth
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the Lord thy God require of thee but to do justly and love mercy. So doing, thou mayest be said to walk with him: to be his friend and associate. How strong an incentive is this to a solicitude about God's friendship; that it will put a man upon nothing but what is in itself excellent! and how much is it to be lamented, that we will seek each other's friendship and favour by a series of foolish and hurtful lusts, which in the end drown in perdition; but will not seek the friendship of Deity, although the means of obtaining and enjoying that are equally successful and reputable. Men may well be confounded at the reflection of their having sought the friendship of their fellow mortals with great uncomfortableness, and perhaps with some dishonourableness, while the ambition of divine favour has been extinguished in their bosoms; or been sacrificed to meaner affections and desires, although the means of obtaining that, are (like the fruits of it) noble and glorious.

III. Friend-

III. Friendship with God confers the very highest honour: and this is a further motive for our cultivation of it. God is the fountain of honour as well as of life: and therefore the closer and stricter our connections with him are, the greater lustre is reflected upon us. God reminded the Jewish church of the infinite advantage derived to it from its intimate relation to him. Since thou wast precious in my sight, and I loved thee, thou hast been honourable: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life. The fate of nations shall subserve thy interest and benefit. Upon this account it is, that the righteous are the excellent of the earth, and more excellent than their neighbours; they go through the world in better company, in a higher walk of life. The honour of heaven itself is exhibited under the idea of divine converse and friendship: 'Thou hast a few names even in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white; for they are worthy.'

worthy.' Paul meant to magnify both his conduct and himself, when he said, 'the life which I now live in in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God.' Faith, and friendship with God, will give splendour to our characters. All ye that have a passion for honour then, come and seek it here. Let ambition make you religious: your ambition will never have so just or so ample a province to exert itself in, as religion affords. Where is the wise man? We may ask this ironically; while we see men endeavouring to aggrandise themselves by every connection but friendship with their Maker. A certain nobleman of our own country^s, was so charmed with the fine temper and genius, of that rare and accomplished person, Sir Philip Sidney, that he would have no other inscription on his tomb than, 'Here lies Sir Philip Sidney's friend.' Let my tomb tell, and tell truly, that a friend of God lies in it; and this will be more than if it was adorned with

^s The Lord Brooke.

all the trophies of war, or emblems of science. How honourable! To live in this world and be admitted as visitants to a better! How honourable! When in point of our real and pleasing intercourse with deity, that may be said unto us, 'ye are come to God the judge of all!' And when, in virtue of a raised and heavenly frame of mind, we are (according to Paul's manner of expressing himself) actually 'raised up from the dead, and made to sit together in heavenly places:' this is in a certain sense true when our earthly places and stations are dignified with heavenly connections and affections. The soul that is habituated to divine converse, that soul possesses the highest honours: it possesses its own high and appropriate honours; and shines by a reflection of the glorious excellencies of its Maker.

IV. The pleasure, as well as honour, there is in friendship with God, is a further reason for our desiring to enter into it, and be established in it. Solomon describes the exhilarating influence of friendship thus: 'iron sharpeneth iron, so
a man

a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend:’ removes the furrows from his brow, and the sadness from his heart. Agreeably to this declaration of the reviving effect of friendship, we read of ‘the light of God’s countenance lifted up upon his servants;’ and of their faces ‘being lightened thereby:’ all impressions of sorrow, fear, and shame, instantly forsaking them. The apostle John speaks with apparent rapture—‘we have known and believed the love which God hath to us.’ Most certainly our pleasure and satisfaction will increase in proportion to the degree in which we are conscious that the divine affection of love prevails in us towards God; or see cause for believing that God bears that affection towards us. Peace and joy constitute two-thirds of God’s kingdom within us: that kingdom by the laws of which he rules us, and in which we yield ourselves to him as his subjects and friends: and must not a most happy inward state be the result of all? The friends of God are commanded to ‘rejoice in the Lord, and that always:’

and is not allowed and perpetual joy a great matter, and a great recommendation of any character or state in which it is to be found? But I enlarge not on this head: having already spoken of delight in God both as belonging to friendship with him, and arising from it.

V. We should be friends of God, because we in gratitude owe him our Friendship. Should his glory shine before us unregarded? And his goodness pass by us unheeded? Transient and infrequent favours are often forgot—but surely incessant beneficence should have irresistible power, and subdue all before it. A gift hath grace in the sight of every man. A man's gift maketh room for him. And do we want this incitement to our making the great God lovely in our eyes, and giving him a place in our hearts? Or shall the immense and unlimited bounty of God fail of those returns which the scanty and partial favours of men usually command? The bands of love are called the bands of a man; human nature being generally drawn by them, and consentingly

ingly held in them: and shall these bands lose their power when God would detain us in them? Shall his sun shine around us, in strength and glory, and not kindle in our hearts the spark of friendship to him, of whose benignity he is the minister, and of whose brightness he is the inexpressive image? Shall showers of mercy, abundant and numerous as those which water the earth, fall upon us, and yet leave us unfruitful in this most reasonable and most natural affection? Let every grateful sentiment and feeling rise and forbid it. How justly may God stop the communication of such blessings from himself to us, as cannot lead us up to him! How justly discontinue that bounty which gives him no interest in us, or hold upon us!

As is God's friendship to us, so should be our gratitude to him: it should be according to the variety, and value, of his blessings: where he has given much, he should be loved much: and yet, how often is this most reasonable principle practically denied, and inverted! Insensibility of God, alienation from him, and

disobedience to him, have even increased with his favours! It has been so with individuals, and with communities.

The places that have abounded most with the delights of life, have had the worst sinners in them; and as the soil has been fruitful, and the air pure, the men and the manners have been proportionately infected. Lot chose his habitation in those delicious plains that were as the garden of the Lord for richness and rivers: but he found, that as the hand of nature had dressed up the country into a garden, the inhabitants had turned it into a hell. So it was in the infancy of the world; and so it has been in later ages: fulness of bread, and a plenteousness of delicacies and dainties, have made the men of more than one city, to be 'wicked, and sinners before the Lord exceedingly.' The sweetest and most salubrious parts of Italy, the places in the vicinity of Rome, that excelled in the advantages of earth, air, and water, exceeded equally in the violations of temperance, chastity and honour: they became the retreats of her
dissolute

dissolute and profligate emperors; where, the cares and duties of empire forgotten, they abandoned themselves to all the excesses of sensuality and impurity; and have entailed notes of infamy on the places, by the connection of their own names, and practices, with them! *Baiæ*, delightful to a proverb⁶, will ever have the associated idea of unlawful love, and lust: and *Caprea* shall never be mentioned, but the intemperances, and impurities of *Tiberius* shall come into remembrance also.

With individuals, most obliged individuals, instead of due returns to a bounteous God, you find rebellion and defiance. 'He has filled their houses with good things, and they say unto him, depart from us; and what can the Almighty do for them?' He can certainly do one thing against them: and that is, empty their houses of what he put into them; for 'lo, their good is not in their own hand;'

⁶ Nullus in orbe locus *Baiis* præluceat amænis.

HOR.

but still in his, who has lifted them up, and can cast them down. They want but one frown of his to blast them !

Let me, having so fair an occasion, enlarge a little on the folly and odiousness of thankless and graceless prosperity : which destroys all the charm, and effect, which wealth and elevation are supposed to have belonging to them.

According to the above representation in the book of Job, God is a forgotten and insulted benefactor. Men are enemies to him for his love ; and as their obligations to him are stricter, and stronger, they fulfil them the less. This path of inattention, ingratitude, and disobedience, is in that chapter called, ‘ the old way that wicked men have trodden, whose foundation was overthrown with a flood.’ We know there was an ancient race of sensual and thankless men concerning whom this was literally true. God swept away them, their abused plenty, and the earth they stood upon, together. The course and conduct, so awfully punished upon the old

old world, are found in the new. Men eat and drink, and give God no thanks. 'They eat the lambs out of the flock; and the calves out of the midst of the stall;' hardly any thing is good enough for their epicure taste; or great enough to answer the extravagant opinion they have formed of themselves: but every thing is too great, and too good, to make a return of to God, whether in a way of piety or charity: even a kind thought, or a good word spoken, of this divine friend above, is reckoned too much!

Is not gratitude due to benefactors? and if so, is it not due to the greatest benefactor of all; and in the largest measures from those that receive the most copiously from him? Let us not act by the blessed God, in a contrariety to sentiments and rules that govern in the minds of all liberal men, and influence them in their conduct towards each other. Take the outward respect that the rich, and high, and honourable, of the earth, shew to God, for the measure and sample of their inward veneration and gratitude,

and you must pronounce them to be, 'without God in the world:' Atheists, with those indubitable demonstrations of his existence, and providence, ten thousand mercies!

God has expressly consecrated one day in seven to the solemn acknowledgment of himself; and to the contemplation of his perfection and bounty, in that beautiful and glorious world, the productions of which they so largely share: but, how is that day considered by the upper classes of mankind, who have so much to acknowledge beyond the common level! Their perverted blessings assume a voice, 'O go into his temple, and speak of his honour!' Their reply is, 'we are lords, we will come no more unto thee:' let mean people worship God, we are above it. We are lords, we will come no more unto thee! What then, is it the privilege of your boasted peerage, to be estranged from the heavenly court, and to have nothing to do with the eternal king? Will you leave all the honour, and pleasure, and advantage, of being devoted
homagers

homagers of the sovereign Lord, to the poor, and low of the earth? You are not so generous and liberal to them in other things. 'We will not come unto thee!' Why not? You will go to court, in your best habiliments, in honour of a birth; or in commemoration of a restoration, or a victory. Is the birth of a world nothing: a world created, or a world restored: the origin of all things, or the renovation of all things: is both the old creation, and the new, to be forgotten; and the day that is the memorial of both, to be passed over with neglect: or should you not on its return make it your pleasure, as it is your duty, to bless him 'who made the heavens, and the earth, the sea, and the fountains of water; and who by the resurrection of his Son from the dead, has begotten you again to a lively hope?' Will you leave all the comfort and happiness that creating power inspires, and that the dispensation of him who rose from the dead, more abundantly brings, to the very poor whom you affect to despise? They will so far, be richer than

you: being rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom that God has promised. Perhaps you think the lower of religion, because the poor share with you in its duties, and pleasures; and leave the sweets of devotion to them, as the poet described some leaving the sweets of the morning⁷, accounting the entertainment of that early embellished scene, a species of pleasure, disgraced by vulgar contemplation and use: being accessible to all who have sense enough, or nature enough, left in them to partake of it.

But reflect, that the most valuable blessings you know, you partake of in common with the poor; and cannot have them but with their participation. The eyelids of the morning open upon them, when they open upon you: and health, and spirit, are more theirs than yours: and is light, health, or cheerfulness less dear to you for this?

Is rest from business or pleasure, unwelcome? and if desirable in the general,

⁷ ——— usu plebeio trita voluptas.

does

does it lose its acceptableness, by the grand and lovely circumstances, and objects, that attach themselves to the rest of the sabbath?

It has been customary in all ages and nations, to observe days and times, in commemoration of great and extraordinary events: and by way of doing honour to their names and memories that brought them to pass: and is all spoiled, and the usage absurd, where God is the object of remembrance and honour?

‘The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God:’ and, as by pride we lose in all things, so especially in religion: nothing can make us amends that we discard that for. The rich may leave the pleasures of religion to the poor; (as a proud, and fastidious man, has sometimes let a proffered kindness to himself, go to an inferior, or to a servant :) but, here, the rich let the best things slip them; as themselves would acknowledge, if they condescended so far as to take and try them. ‘Honour the sabbath day:’ and then tell me, if in the honour of it,

and the satisfactions from it, you do not receive more than you have received in all things that you have prophaned it for: your foods, and wines; your company, and your wanderings, on that day!

Ye rich and great, ye owe it to God, to be grateful to him, and to serve him, more than others: and ye owe it to men; to their just apprehensions, and natural conclusions. The world knows, and sees, your special obligations to God: watches your discharge, and will execrate your violation of them!

When Asinius Pollio was solicited by Cæsar to join interest with him against Antony, he replied, ‘ Though I am even with Antony, and above him, on the score of real services and obligations, his good offices to me are more visible; and more known: and, therefore, I cannot desert him: I will withdraw myself from your contest, and be the captive of the victorious party⁸. Now this applies to the rich and great

⁸ Non prætereatur Asinii Pollionis factum et dictum memorabile. Namque cum se post Brundisiam pacem

great of this world : God's benefits to them are known benefits ; all the world sees them ; and all the liberal and generous part of the world, will censure and condemn an insensibility of them ; and an unworthy conduct, in the use, or rather the abuse of them.

And ye owe it to yourselves, ye great and rich of the earth, to be grateful to God, and to serve him. Great as you are, or suppose yourselves to be, ye can never be truly and completely great without religion. Still, 'one thing you lack,' if

pacem continuisset in Italia, neque aut vidisset unquam Reginam, at post enervatum amore ejus Antonii animum, partibus ejus se miscuisset, rogante Cesare, ut secum ad bellum proficisceretur Actiacum ; mea, inquit, in Antonium, majora merita sunt ; illius in me, beneficia notiora ; itaque, discrimine vestro me subtraham, et ero præda victoris.

VELL. PAT. II. 86.

This Asinius Pollio was the person to whom Horace addressed the Ode, which I quoted from at page 174, and who from this delicacy of sentiment appears to have had it very properly inscribed to him ; for the just notions of human life and happiness that it contains.

you

you want that ; one thing, necessary to the entireness of a high character. Preserve a similitude of soul and estate, be great yourselves, as well as have all things great about you : let mind and mansion agree : attend to inward embellishment : and with the amplitude and ornament of house, garden, and plantation, pay a regard to the living architecture of your own spirits ! Aim at a beautiful œconomy of the human heart : the enlargedness, pureness, and good treasure of it : attend to the order and worth of the objects, affections, and passions, that engage and fill it.

‘ You will no more come unto him !’
You must come to him, again and again !
Have you no happiness incomplete ; no interests insecure ; do you enjoy what you cannot lose ; or which retaining you may not be thrown out of the enjoyment of : are your houses safe from fear ; your bodies unaffailable by sickness ; and your souls by painful surprize : have you no fears within ; or fightings without ; and will that day of death never come, in which all human resources will be but miserable comforters ?

comforters? A rich and great man without the spirit of religion, is an unlovely and a disgusting sight: as well as is in an insecure condition.

Religion is necessary to give grace and comeliness to fortune: and care should be taken that wealth does not destroy what it should be further adorned by. 'Thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness:' but it is a melancholy thing to have wisdom corrupted, however brilliant the things that mar and spoil it: I would not have my eye destroyed, though by the point of a diamond: nor my virtues buried, though a splendid tomb should cover them!

If you would be great and honourable, do not forsake God, but serve him. To be his servant is ambition and glory in heaven itself; 'I am thy fellow-servant, and of them that keep the commandments of God with thee.' The 'ungrateful and unthankful,' are made to complete and close the sum of all the impurities and iniquities of the heathen.

VI. Friend-

VI. Friendship with God is absolutely necessary to us: and this is a very urgent motive to the cultivation of it. They that are far from him shall perish. We may be in friendship with earth, and in league with hell: but in his favour is life. Should not poor creatures who have a property in nothing that their happiness depends upon, seek a friendship with him who has all things at his disposal? Should not he have our hearts in whose hand our breath is? Why man thou art under a sentence! thou art under his sentence! and wilt thou not make him thy friend? O do it immediately: remember, while he is soliciting thy friendship, he can open the doors of the other world upon thee; call thee into his presence, and punish thee for thine enmity. Consider the danger of delay, and seek friendship with him immediately.

We cannot have all that we want in any mortal friend; nor in all of them put together; their vigilance cannot always secure us; nor their kindness in all cases supply

supply us: but it is the transcendent attribute of him that keepeth Israel, that 'he neither flumbereth nor sleepeth;' and the treasury of his goodness can answer every demand that poverty, pain, sickness, or fear, can make upon it. 'My God shall supply all your need according to his glorious riches!' My God shall do this: how important and desirable a friend is he! We want that friend that can do more for us than men; and do for us longer than they can: that can take us where they leave us: at the struggles of death; at the edge of the grave.

Did I stand before kings, I would say, 'be in amity and alliance with this king: this king, of time, and of eternity! Of more constant assiduity, and more pervading influence, than any of the princes in whom you put your trust. Seek a friend in him, more vigilant than your guards; more faithful than your obliged dependents: a defence, stronger than your hosts; more impregnable than your towers: a helper, of easier and readier access than your most devoted subjects; and your
final

final refuge when you become like unto them, and weak as they are !'

We may be happy without riches : and are not always happy with them. There may be great unhappiness in a high estate ; and there often is great enjoyment in a low one. Real happiness is dealt out with an even hand than we think, because connected with what we do not take into the account. Virtue, with which only we can be truly happy, is in the power of all ; and blesses those who may not be thought blessed. Remember the infallible connection of goodness and happiness ; and the as certain union of infelicity and iniquity : guide your own judgment, and correct the judgment of others by it. May not any man be happy, say some, with a good estate ; an honourable post ; the ruler's favour ; with preferments in his view, resources at hand, and all gratifications of the senses in his grasp : what can make a person happy if these things do not ? I answer, the favour, and friendship of God. With his apprehended frown, or experienced withdrawal, the world cannot

cannot fill us ; nor any multiplicity or repetition of its charms keep us from painful impressions : this the Bible asserts ; and we see it confirmed by, sometimes, very affecting monuments⁹ !

But

⁹ In my walks or wanderings I come to a superb and glorious mansion : heaven, earth, air, and sea, all conspire to bless, and beautify, and aggrandize the spot. The spacious lawn, and rolling ocean, constitute a magnificence awful and pleasing. Benevolence adds to the effect of grandeur ; and happy he that can command the union ! A range of humble lodges, constructed with neatness and uniformity, arose in view : they were charitable covers for certain selected and virtuous poor ; a former Lord had built them : imagination suggested this contrast to his own splendour, and kindness obeyed the suggestion. I find myself in an unsuspected paradise ! Who is the favoured owner ; the privileged possessor of this heaven upon earth ? It had been lately relinquished by an unrighteous and unhappy man, who had withdrawn from the light, to withdraw from himself ; unable to endure the conflicting passions of a guilty and wretched soul ! he had cast out the poor from their dwellings, before he went to his own place : his name announced, I knew his connections ; and had heard his end ; but had not known that this palace of delights had been any part of his fortuitous inheritance.

In

But what if wealth and enjoyment were closely united, we could not ensure the one, because we cannot retain the other. 'Riches make to themselves wings, and fly away!' What words can better ex-

In a different direction, I the next day came to the way-side cottage: poverty sometimes has its elegancies and attractions; and it had them here. I found myself invited by appearances, and compelled to go in. The dweller was eating her bread with cheerfulness, fought by the little efforts of fancy, and ingenious industry; recommended to the notice, and rewarded by the bounty of them that passed by; every attention repaid by an overflow of affection and gratitude. Here was no fear of want, or murmur of complaint: a trust of heaven in the heart; and the serenity of heaven in the countenance. I ask, by what name are you called—whence come you—and how found or made you, this place of sweet content? She was one of those whom the above victim to his own remorse and despair had cast out; and whom with other, once protected creatures, he had sent to seek their bread in solitary or desolate places!

The reflection was natural: with a sense of divine friendship, and favour, how little will do; without it, how much will avail nothing! God with us, or departed from us, makes all the difference. Is not God a necessary friend? Believe him so, and make him thine!

prefs

press the uncertainty and capriciousness of the world, in all its gifts and favours; and its mockery of poor mortals in all their thoughts and expedients for retaining and keeping! 'Make to themselves wings!' My riches, says the possessor, shall have no wings: I will put no wings to them, by any negligence, profusion, or vanity of mine: no, nor by my liberalities, and charities neither: but your riches will have wings of their own making, without needing any of your putting! In agreement with this declaration of Solomon, and, as I think, improvement upon it, the Scythians made their goddesses of fortune, with hands, and wings, but no feet: hands to give, and wings to fly away with: but no feet to stand or stay upon¹. Ye votaries of fortune, and ye

¹ Nostri, sine pedibus dicunt esse fortunam; quæ manus et pinnas tantum habet: cum manus porrigit pinnas quoque comprehendere non finit.

QUINT. CUR. LIB. VII. 8.

In the speech of a Scythian chief to Alexander: repressing his ambition, and directing him to 'deeds more worthy of a God,' in a vein of very fine satire, and strong natural eloquence.

favourities

favourities of fortune, will ye not allow the similitude, and the image to be just? Take what she gives as greedily as you will; but think not to compress her wings, or pluck their feathers; if you aim at holding her, she is gone: all but God, are shy of our embraces and confidences! Of him, and to him, we may say, 'I will hold thee, and not let thee go, till thou blest me;' but to God we do not betake ourselves; nor make these allowed claims upon his goodness.

Without any great instances of the capriciousness of fortune, or the affecting reverses of human condition, which we sometimes behold, life as it lengthens, will decrease in its enjoyment; and the late stages of a long life, will want what were the supports and delights of earlier periods. The fashion of the world passeth away, as we pass through it; and more especially, 'the grace, of the fashion of it, perisheth!' Former props are withdrawn; and the fountains that once flowed, are exhausted, or sealed. Friends die: acquaintances are removed: neighbour-
hoods

hoods are changed ; and the familiar, and courteous, if unimportant intercourses of them are over : we cannot fetch back them that are gone ; nor put any in their room, under whose shadow we have sat with great delight. At late age, a man's own family is dispersed : and like a tree that has dropt its foliage, and is bereft of its branches, he stands lonely ; unsupported, and disarrayed ; in something of the nakedness in which he came into the world, and shall return ! For present payment, or in contemplation of an after consideration, some may be found that will sell him a portion of their company, and their courtesies : but they are seen to repent of their bargain, even when they are making it : and leave the party in it, to all its hollowness and unsatisfactoriness. So is it with all the advantages of wealth and fulness. ' So doth the rich man fade away in his ways !'

And besides this break of connection, relation and alliance, advanced life, and old age, have many infirmities ; under which we want suitable supports and helps. When our
days

days are becoming few, they are in some respects evil. We want protection and support when we are about to end life, almost, as much as when we begin it. 'A second childhood,' is a familiar term with us; and the idea it carries in it, is but too just. What shall we do when those days come, or draw nigh, in which the experience of men, as well as the declaration of the Bible, tells us, 'we shall find no pleasure.' What we have to do, is the making God our friend; and the carrying on the friendship, by the habits of faith, love, and devotion. O consider what a friend God is: eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame: the strength of our hearts, and the health of our countenance, in all our natural, and unavoidable failures and decays. 'To old age, and hoary hairs he is with us:' and with the satisfactions of his company and favour, we shall have no occasion to seek the company that flees us; the amusements that are unsuitable to us; the converses that weary, and the festivities that oppress us.

How

How unlovely, and compassionate a sight, is an irreligious old man: he has been estranged from God all his days; and, now, men are estranged from him; and refuse him the attentions and services that he would willingly purchase. Youthful lusts have worn and destroyed themselves; and the man, in a great measure, with themselves; and besides the injured, visible man, he has no 'hidden man,' in that which is not corruptible. His once darling gratifications cloy; or if his taste remains for them, he cannot go out after them, or meet with companions in them. 'Son, remember thou hast had thy good things!' Wines, and foods, cannot longer exhilarate thee; and the world forsakes thee!

How different is it with the 'old disciple:' the friend of God; with the spirit of that friendship in him, and the fruits of it about him! What does religion, which constitutes the friendship, do for him? It does not bring back youthful health and vigour; strength of nerve, and energy of limb. Though its precepts

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tend to preserve our corporeal powers, it means not to restore them. But this is what religion does for us: its spirit, and hope, will make us equal to every trial, and support us under every depression of our powers: and having inspired us with a life that is divine, will in the invincible principle of that, give us the mastery over all the infirmities and maladies of the human.

‘ Rejoice, O young man in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth:’ but let no wise and devotional man presume, or fear, that age will of necessity be disconsolate and irksome. The spirit of religion is a well of water within us: it is so, for its refreshing, as well as its purifying influence; and it often yields its refreshments with especial copiousness, when it is near springing up into everlasting life.

CHAP. IX.

SOME DIRECTIONS FOR THE MORE
 ADVANTAGEOUSLY PRESERVING
 FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD. WE MUST
 MAINTAIN DEEP HUMILITY IN THE
 COURSE OF IT; WE MUST PAY A
 CONSTANT REGARD TO THE MEDI-
 TATION OF CHRIST; WE MUST
 MAINTAIN HIGH AND HONOURABLE
 THOUGHTS OF PROVIDENCE; MAKE
 A GOOD USE OF ITS BOUNTIES; BE
 FREQUENT IN ACTS OF REPENT-
 ANCE; ASPIRE AFTER GREATER
 DEGREES AND HABITS OF PURITY.

I. **W**E must be humble. God selects
 the humble man for his friend
 in preference of any other. 'I dwell in
 the high and holy place with him also
 that is of a contrite and humble spirit.'
 Humility must accompany all our ex-
 ercises

ercises of friendship with God. Notwithstanding the freeness and familiarity of the friendship that subsisted between them, David did not forget that Jonathan was a king's son; and paid him the tribute of profound respect and obeisance 'in the midst of their mutual endearments. David arose and fell on his face to the ground, and bowed himself three times.' We must in like manner preserve and express unfeigned reverence in all our transactions with God, and approaches to him as a friend. Though we may come with a certain boldness to the throne of his grace, we must not come with impudence and rudeness. Though we may pray fervently, we must pray modestly. Though we praise him with warmth and affection, it must be with veneration also: and while we plead his promises with faith, we must do it with submission. We serve God acceptably even as friends, when we serve him with reverence and godly fear: and if we do not preserve such reverence and fear in our intercourse with him, we manifest a weak and blameable spirit: we
shew

shew that we cannot bear condescension: that we are for trespassing upon grace and clemency: and we may expect to be treated by God, as we should certainly in such cases be treated by men, to have our services refused, our petitions denied, and to be kept at a greater distance. 'Fear the Lord and his goodness,' is a line that every true friend of God should wear deeply inscribed upon his heart. God is in heaven and we upon earth: we must not therefore rush irreverently into his temple, or be rash and hasty in our words there. He will quickly behold and resent the affront. Friend! how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment? Why appearest thou before me without the proper attire, and the true ornaments of a worshipping soul: composed thoughts: holy affections: a solemn and collected frame?

God does not forget his tremendous majesty, when he makes the most encouraging declarations of his condescending mercy: he does not forget that he is the high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity,

when he declares his disposition to dwell with the humble and the contrite ; and we should not forget it.

In order to promote a spirit of pure and deep humility in all our religious intercourse with God in the character of our divine friend, let us treasure up in our minds some of the scripture representations of his incomparable and unspeakable grandeur. Isaiah, in all the astonishing imagery of a prophet's pen, describes the vast mountain of Lebanon as kindled up into one hallowed fire : and the numberless beasts of it consuming in one immense sacrifice : and all nations of men, as gathered together to attend the solemnity. These are images awfully magnificent ; but yet inadequate to the prophet's thoughts : which, aggrandised by the contemplation of that eternal majestic God whose oracle he was, grew too big for any thing actually created, yea, or boundlessly imagined to express : for he adds, with the same sublimity of sentiment : All these things are as nothing ! But let us attend to the lofty stile in which
God

God proclaims himself. I AM THAT I AM! Tell the children of Israel that I AM hath sent you to them: the being who exists in so excellent, transcendent, and peculiar a manner, as to make all other existence vanish before him. I AM HE: I AM THE FIRST, I ALSO AM THE LAST. I AM GOD, AND THERE IS NONE BESIDE ME! This is the true voice of Deity. Isaiah had pronounced the pomp of ten thousand sacrifices: and the solemnity of an assembled world: and the blaze of Lebanon when it should be converted into one huge and amazing altar: to be before God as nothing! God declares all to be in fact that very nothing which the prophet had told us it might be counted. He appropriates all existence, as well as all deity and excellence, to himself: and leaves only the umbrage and shadow of being to the creatures. This is the glorious God that we are allowed to call friend: and does not profound humility become us in all the professions, sentiments, and exercises of our friendship to-

wards him, and in the whole of our walk before him?

Accordingly, the friends of God have always been humble men: their very friendship with him has made them so: the calm contemplation of his infinite glories has made them as nothing in their own eyes. Observe the reverence of Abraham's spirit, when allowed even to speak to God: 'Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes! O let not the Lord be angry and I will speak!—O let not the Lord be angry and I will speak yet but this once!' Moses intreated a sight of the glory of God: God proclaimed his mercy in the several methods of its vouchsafement, answerably to the sins and miseries of men: Moses made haste, bowed his head to the earth, and worshipped. Job, after God's lofty and friendly conference with him out of the whirlwind, expressed the like self-abasement and humiliation: 'now that mine eye seeth thee; now that I have heard thee speak, and
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from thy lips discern a scanty portion of thy glory, I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.' Isaiah's vision in the temple of the Lord's majesty, and the proclamation made of his purity, by exalted, celestial, but revering beings, veiling their faces from his unsufferable glory, produced in him a like frame and state of mind with what God's other servants professed. The glorious sights and sounds made him startle at his own meanness and guilt. 'Wo is me ; I am undone : I am a man of unclean lips ; and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips ; and mine eyes have seen the king, the Lord of Hosts !'

II. As we would carry on friendship with God in a proper and advantageous manner, we must pay a constant regard to the mediation of Christ. By him we are to come to God in the noblest and happiest manner at last : and by him to come to God now. Our prayer is to be offered in his name, according to his own direction : and the sacrifice of praise which we render continually, is to be by him. Our repentance must be expressed in obedience to his

command, and encouraged by his promise. Holiness, the fruit of repentance, must be in conformity to his example, and enlivened and improved by the bright prospects of immortality which he has given us. We must be alive to God through Jesus Christ. The pleasing exercises of hope, and joy, are to be indulged, no otherwise, than with a spirit of unfeigned gratitude and thankfulness for Christ: for he is our hope: and we joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ. In a word, all that sacred intercourse with God which is the business and pleasure of a christian's life, in the capacity of a friend of God, is to be carried on through Jesus Christ; and in the spirit of his religion. The same may be said of all public solemnities and duties of religion: Jesus is the way, and the truth and the life, and we must go to the father by him.

III. As we would live in friendship with God to the greater advantage and comfort, let us maintain high and honourable thoughts of his providence. Let us beware of suspicion, and distrust: these often
weaken

weaken and ruin human friendships: let them have no place in the divine. We know that the end of all God's works and ways shall be worthy of himself: and that it shall receive the full approbation of exalted and virtuous minds: let us not then suffer any thing that befalls us in our contracted stations and concerns, to militate against such our faith and knowledge. When any thought arises in our minds that tends to a denial of God's goodness to us, or that would infer a diminution of it, let us be jealous of that thought. Let us lay it down as an incontrovertible maxim, that God is good to them that are of a clean heart: that he may afflict in the very faithfulness of his friendship: that he may mean the weight of affliction, as preparatory to the weight of glory: and that his goodness may be as real in what we suffer, as in what we enjoy. Let us collect the several instances of God's apparent and indubitable goodness, and have them ready at hand to oppose to our own erroneous fancies, and vitiating prejudices: this will preserve the composure and

settledness of our spirits, and therefore will be acting like friends both towards God and ourselves. And with a thorough conviction of the goodness of providence, let us accustom ourselves to the admiration of it. Let adoring sentiments possess our hearts, and, go through the world with us. Let us take confidence from God's general goodness. 'Seek him that maketh the seven stars, and Orion!' He that guards the vast interests of the universe will never neglect or betray our little interests: as he delights in the prosperity of his servants, he will pursue their prosperity; though he may not always do it within the lines that they would draw for him: he will be left to his own superior and comprehensive measures; but in the issue all things shall work together for good to them that love him.

Such sentiments of God and providence as these are, enter into the idea of friendship with God, and will greatly strengthen and increase it.

IV. We shall carry on friendship with God in an advantageous manner, by a religious

religious use of his bounties. We know the power of riches for making us friends in this world: and we may make friends by their means in another. By a right use and application of them, we may pursue the interests of both worlds at once. We may make God our friend: for, with such sacrifices, as the doing good, and communicating, God is well pleased. We may make Christ our friend, he declaring himself the head, that is helped, and blessed, in every member: the kind Lord, that is received, and relieved, in every servant! And we are taught by him to believe, that we may make other friends in the next world the same way: may send such friends before us, who shall be ready to receive us to everlasting habitations when all things here fail us. And how pleasing and interesting is the thought of our having friends in another world; made such, by our liberality to them in this! Friends, that shall receive us with joy and gratitude, when we shall be turned out of all that we here possess! They may say for themselves, as well as a condescending

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ing and benevolent Saviour for them : ' we were hungry, and ye gave us meat : we were thirsty, and ye gave us drink : we were strangers, and ye took us in : naked, and ye clothed us : sick, and ye visited us : in prison, and ye came unto us.' The last refreshments we partook of in mortal life, were furnished out to us by the hands of your kindness and beneficence ; and now we welcome you to a participation of our superior enjoyments.

For this reason are riches given to their possessors : that both God and men may be served by them : God, by works of piety, and men, by works of charity. God gives the rich, both for their necessities, and their delights : and abridges them in nothing that in the estimation of reason and virtue, contributes to either : but then he insists upon it, that as good stewards of his manifold good things, they use and apply the residue according to his directions. And what can be more equitable than this ? What is more unfriendly than unfaithfulness ? If a mortal friend entrust me with a part of his substance,

stance, ought I not to use it agreeably to his will? And if instead of using it to certain worthy, and excellent purposes, as he commanded, I throw it away in methods that he disapproves, and condemns, and has expressly forbidden, am not I most highly criminal? Unworthy of such a man's friendship, and of all further marks of his confidence? Yet, faulty as this kind of conduct appears, it is the conduct of thousands towards the great God every day. He entrusts them with his bounties; and they abuse the trust. He says, occupy till I come; and they disbelieve, or forget, that he will ever come. He commands them, do good to all, and especially to the household of faith; and they having served themselves, in the measure that their lusts and appetites demand, waste the remaining abundance upon the worst of characters: upon harlots, gamesters, and revellers. This perversion and abuse of riches will make both God and men their enemies: and will subject them to strange confusion and pain when the mandate shall
come:

come : give an account of thy stewardship, for thou shalt be no longer steward.

But the good use of riches, gives value and lustre to a character, in the eyes both of heaven and earth. This will make God our friend : he will consider us, as what he intended we should be : the almoners of his bounty, and the ministers of his providence : rectifying, according to our power, those inequalities in providence of which some so loudly complain : we shall have the very highest relish and enjoyment of riches while they remain with us : and when they do take wing, as we have observed that sooner or later they will, they will be grand and beautiful in their flight ; as the eagle when soaring towards heaven : they will carry away with them no charge of perversion or abuse against us ; but will make a good report of us at the throne of him who is the proprietor, and Lord of all. Having been faithful in little, for so the largest earthly possessions may be called ; we shall be rewarded with much : and having suitably improved the false and fugacious

fugacious Mammon; shall have the true riches committed to us: the riches of glory and immortality. We shall be considered as having approved ourselves the friends of God and goodness in this world, and God will be our everlasting friend in the world to come. The religious use of God's mercies is no more than justice: yet such is his generosity, that he will take it for friendship, and reward it as such. He will honour and reward mere fidelity, as a shining and distinguished virtue: well done, good and faithful servant!

V. If we would carry on Friendship with God to advantage, we must be frequent in acts of repentance. It is the contrite as well as humble soul, that God in an especial manner looks to, and dwells with. God expects and knows, that there will be, on our part, many violations of that friendship into which he enters with us; as often as we are conscious to ourselves of this, that we have broke the laws of friendship with God, let us immediately go to him; acknowledge our fault, and ask forgiveness. Let us be willing to ask
that

that pardon of God, in a way of religion, which in a like case, we should ask of men in a way of civility. Let no unacknowledged offence lie heavy on our spirits; to estrange us from God, or to abate our confidence in calling him friend, or father. In human friendships, very trifling circumstances have, for want of being properly excused, and apologized for, been construed into serious faults: and many friendships have strangely worn off upon the slightest grounds, for want of a timely submission in the offending party. Let us take care that Friendship with God suffer not with us in this way. When we transgress against God, let us make up matters with him immediately: he will be satisfied with such submissions as men with pride and caprice reject: who are oftentimes the harder to be won, in proportion to the degree in which their reconciliation is sought and coveted. God will not treat us thus. Let us confess our transgressions unto the Lord, and he will forgive the iniquity of our sin. God is the compassionate father who will espy his
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his returning prodigal at a distance: run and meet him: accept the scarcely finished humiliation and apology: and renew the relation which the offender has disgraced, and therefore dares not to claim. David found it so: and proposes his own success for the encouragement of future penitents. 'For this shall every one that is godly, pray unto thee, in a time when thou mayest be found: surely in the floods of great waters, they shall not come nigh unto him.'

VI. It is necessary to comfortable and advantageous friendship with God, that we do continually aspire after greater degrees and habits of purity. God is holy, and therefore his friends must be so. Hence the reasonable and solemn charge: 'ye that love the Lord hate evil.' The prophet puts the question, 'Can two walk together, except they be agreed?' The strongest negation is here implied: no, they cannot. Iniquity has no fellowship with God. Unrighteous men may pretend Friendship with God; and arrogate special shares of his friendship to themselves:

felves: like those who cried, 'have we not eaten and drank in thy presence?' But the Lord knoweth them that are his: and we may know them too; they are such as depart from iniquity. The searcher of hearts can distinguish every enemy, although in the mask of a friend; and there is a time coming when he will expose and publicly disown the hypocrite; I know you not whence you are: depart from me! With what a severe countenance does John reprove all pretensions of wicked men to the favour and Friendship of God! 'If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.' A good man could say, depart from me, ye evil doers: and much more will a perfect and a holy God say it. If we are for a real advantageous Friendship with God, purity must be the basis, the cement of that friendship.

And as our Friendship with God must be begun, so also carried on in purity. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners, and purify your hearts, ye double minded; thus draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.

you. Without the love of purity, and some degree of establishment in the sentiments and habits of it, we cannot have that complacency in a holy God, which is included in friendship with him; and of which his genuine friends have always been examples. 'Who is a God like unto thee, glorious in holiness! There is none holy as the Lord. Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee. The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity. Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.' How can an unholy man adopt these sentiments, and join in these triumphant acknowledgments! It is just in proportion to the degree in which holiness is prevalent in us, that we are qualified for Friendship with God on our part: and in the same proportion, God will replenish and bless us with the delights of that friendship. With the pure he will shew himself pure: and with an upright man he will shew himself upright. Purity is the glory of
man:

man: the image of God: this assimilates us to our divine and blessed original: by this we dwell in God, and have God dwelling in us: and by means of the copious and increasng measures of it, we do in part enjoy in this world, the very happiness that is promised to the righteous in another: blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

CONCLU-

CONCLUSION.

I BOW my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named! That condescending God deserves our thanks, who is willing to unite all dutiful and obedient creatures, whether in heaven or on earth, into one family; dignified and blessed by one common relation to, and friendship with himself. While we reverence and adore the divine goodness in this article, let us ask ourselves, Are we interested in this goodness? Are we friends of God? If our judgments and consciences cannot safely tell us that we are, let us next ask, Are we desirous of becoming his friends? If we are not desirous of it, let us proceed in our enquiry, and demand of our own hearts the reasons of

of our indifference and disaffection. If we are desirous of Friendship with God, let us go about establishing it immediately; for delays are dangerous to a proverb.

Perhaps you may say, we are actually friends of God. Are you? How do you shew this? We sometimes worship him: consider, some who were loud in their cry, The temple of the Lord! The temple of the Lord! had no share in the friendship of the great God of that temple. Ceremonious visits are not reckoned for friendship: and yet they might pass for it, abundantly better than some mens visits at the house of their God. We, designedly, do nothing against God, may you say: we offer no outrage or affront, to him, or to his institutions: so far it is well: but if you do nothing for God, you are not worth the name of his friends: a neutral is not a friend. We speak of God with respect and honour: that also is very well: but let us not substitute fine words, and fair professions, in the room of the substantial duty which we owe him. We could not deal thus with our fellow creatures.

tures. Where are your actual services; your cheerful resignations; your obedient submissions; your delightful converse; your confidential trust?

If you are not solicitous about Friendship with God, and do nothing in order to attain to it, what are you solicitous about? And to what do your affections, cares and pursuits tend? It is but lost labour, to rise early, and sit up late, but not to obtain the loving-kindness of the Lord. A philosopher and orator, is said to have been ashamed at seeing a workman risen before him. He could not bear that such a man's trade should go on faster than his philosophy and rhetoric. Can you feel no self-indignation, in that, while meaner interests thrive with you, and inferior friendships strengthen, the grandest friendship of all is neglected by you? Is there no charm in the promise that is made to acquaintance with God, so shall good come unto thee? All manner of good shall come this way: no article of good is excepted in the promise, and we should except none in our expectations and hopes.

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You cannot be so great and high in the world, but God's friendship will make you greater and higher: you cannot be so poor and depressed, but his friendship will ennoble and raise you. Poverty is enriched, and obscurity is brightened by one smile from him! What a lustre and defence is there in one great name²! A man feels its protecting, and its exalting power. The name of the Lord is such a strong tower and glory: but if he hideth his face, who can behold him? Who can maintain his courage or tranquillity? We may look fair in the eyes of the world, and our condition seem showey and enviable; but if we are under the frown of the Almighty, that will either secretly consume us, like a moth; or, like a lion, will tear all to pieces with visible resentment and fury.

You would be glad, it may be, to live in friendship with God, but you do not

² Magnum Reginæ nomen obumbrat.

VIRG. XI. 223.

Texit Pauperiem nominis umbra tui.

CLAUDIAN AD SER.

consent

consent to the conditions of enjoying it. We must deny ourselves, you cry, in such and such pursuits and pleasures. And what then? Are you sure that virtuous self-denial is an infelicity? Has unbounded indulgence always proved a happiness to you? The restraints of Paradise were not so grievous to Adam, as the being turned out of it: and he found himself much more of a slave in the wide wilderness of the world, than he had ever been in that inclosure into which God mercifully put him. Self-denial was the command of God, and was necessary to man, even in Eden itself: and it is necessary still. Without this, God cannot have his glory; nor his creature man, his most valuable enjoyment.

To close the subject, let us remember that friendship with God, is the proper temper of man in this preparatory state: we are going to God, and therefore must be in friendship with him. 'For sake the world, before it forsake thee; and do all things to please God, before thou go to appear before him.' Seek that happy

state which the love of God makes ; and which his presence will perfect and perpetuate. Our heaven, if we ever have one, must be begun upon earth. It is by a restoration to ourselves, and to our God now, that we are to enjoy ourselves and him eternally. Let us be industrious in this our preparatory work, and God will work in us, and with us, of his good pleasure. He will assist us with pleasure, and reward us with pleasure.

‘ Fear not, Abraham, I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward !’ These were words of friendship ; and the music of them must have ever dwelt upon the patriarch’s ear. With the same friendship of Deity, we shall have the like guardianship and fulness.

As we improve in friendship with God, every thing will be friendly to us ; and have additional power to please and bless us. To know that we have the favour of the owner, adds to the pleasure that any magnificent scene, or dwelling, belonging to him, affords us : so will all the light of life be heightened to us, by the better
light

light of God's countenance: but his apprehended frown will clothe the world in darkness to us.

With the friendship of God, every thing will be a friend to serve and bless us. We shall have a good friend within, even an enlightened and upright conscience; and friends without, in every kind and ready exertion of divine providence. All things shall serve our happiness, under the eye and love of the Creator of them all: and according to the beautiful representation of the prophet, attentively, and joyfully, carry up to his throne, the humble desires we may have had of them, and expressed before them! 'And it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens; and they shall hear the earth; and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear my people!' Heaven, earth, and the blessings of the earth, are here made complacently to unite in bearing to the ear of God those virtuous wishes of his servants, which as soon as known, he is ready to fulfil!

Make

Make God thy friend, and then, hope all things from him; and fear nothing from any of his creatures. 'He shall keep thee from the pride of man, and from the power of the wicked: he shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler.' 'The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night: thou shalt be in league with the stones of the field, and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee!' All things are ours if God Almighty be so! Things present, and things to come; life and death all are ours! We may command the tribes of the earth, and look up to the firmament of heaven; may challenge the services of its glorious hosts, and immortal angels; and we shall have the aids of those ministring spirits in every thing that pertains to our peace and salvation. They shall bear us up in their hands; and keep us in all our ways: 'strengthen us in our agony;' and watch our sepulchre; as they were 'seen sitting, one at the head, and another at the feet, where

where the body of Jesus was laid :’ and at last perform the glorious office of collecting the righteous from all quarters of the world, and making one grand, happy, and immortal society, that shall dwell in the presence, and be blest with the friendship of God for ever !

What a gathering together to Christ, at his coming, will this be ; and by how high an instrumentality ! ‘ The son of man shall send his angels, with a great sound, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other !’ All the wise and good that the world has ever known, shall be collected : the holy and glorious creatures that gather them, also gathering for a different destination, all things that offend, and them that do iniquity. How illustrious a confluence of the righteous only ! Be it our ambition to be of it.

‘ Blessed are they that do his commandments ; that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city !’

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

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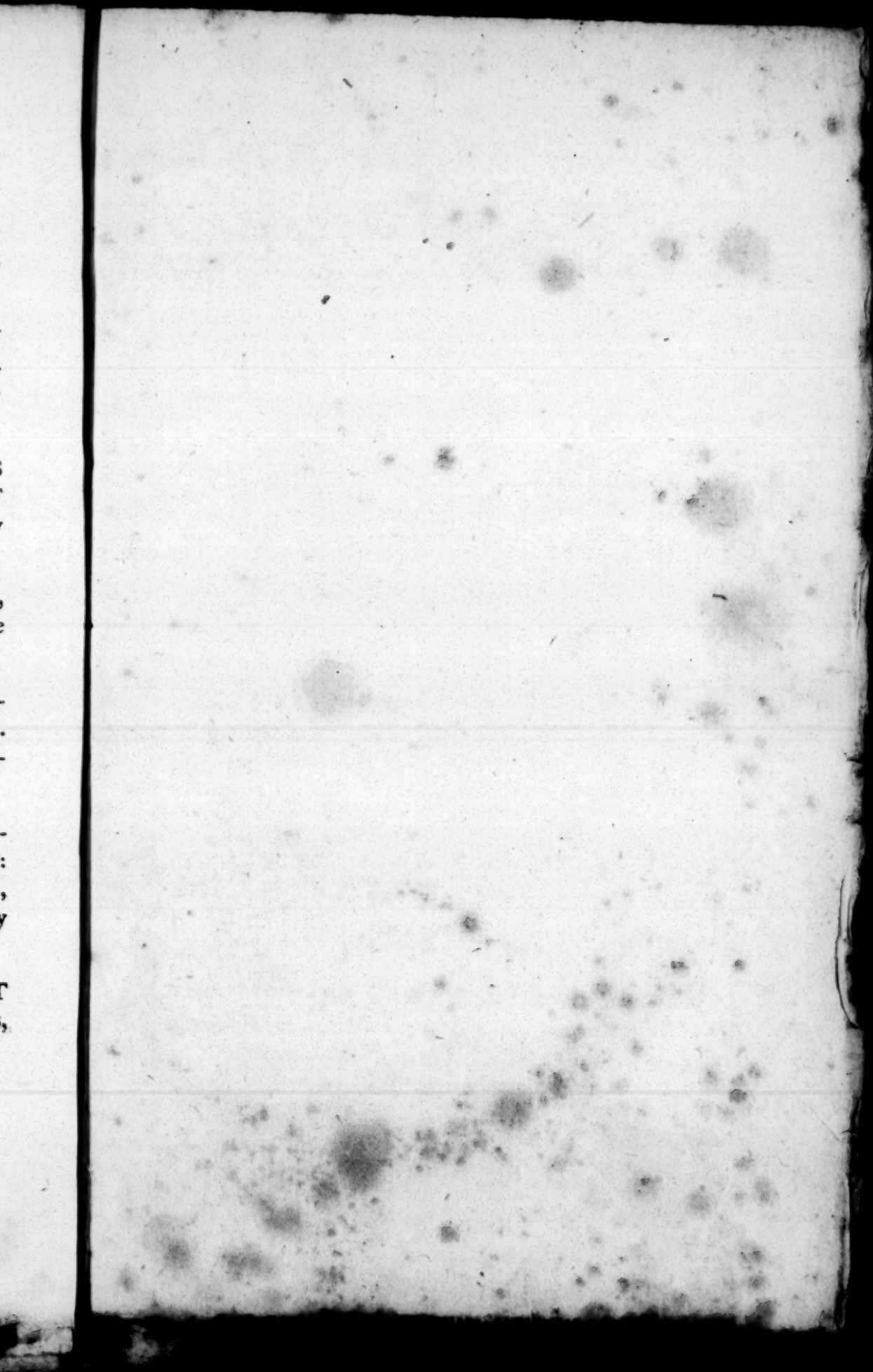
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